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AMAZING CYCLING ROUTES FOR 2025

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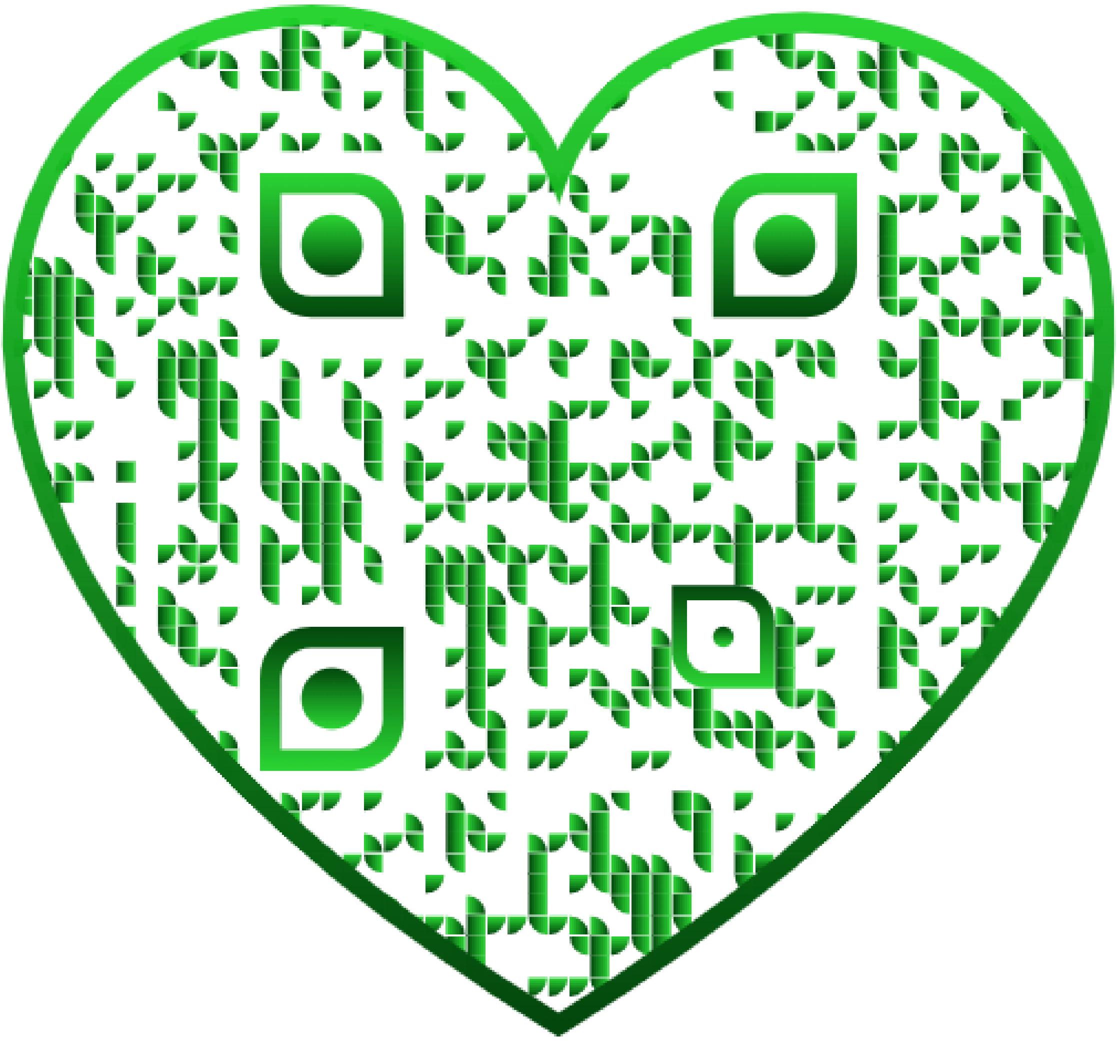

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WELCOME

Nick Branxton
Editor

editor@bike-mag.com

Happy new year and welcome to the first issue of 2025

Let begin the year with your new 2025 Training Plan which provides a comprehensive guide to creating a personalized training plan for cycling enthusiasts in 2025.

The Amazing Cycling Routes for 2025 highlights six breathtaking cycling routes across the world, including the snow-drenched Megavalanche Race in France, Whistler Mountain Bike Park in Canada, and Italy's Granfondo Stelvio Santini Race.

E-Bike Purchase Guide explains the benefits of e-bikes, particularly for hilly areas and less experienced cyclists. It covers key considerations like weight, battery life, cost, and features such as pedal-assist and throttles. Practical tips help potential buyers choose the right model for their needs, emphasizing the growing popularity of e-bikes as a sustainable transport option.

Anna Hughes recounts her nation-long cycling journey, blending a book tour with her ride from Land's End to John O'Groats. The story reflects her perseverance through logistical challenges and physical strain, capturing the simplicity and freedom of cycle touring while inspiring others to explore Britain's beauty by bike.

E-Bike Trails in Ireland showcases Electric Bike Trails in County Leitrim, Ireland, where rugged landscapes and scenic canal pathways create ideal conditions for cycling. The service offers diverse trail options, from family-friendly routes to challenging mountain rides, along with high-quality bike rentals and guided tours rich in Irish heritage.

Explore Cornwall's stunning cycling routes, including the Land's End 100 and the scenic West Cornwall Loop. Iconic landmarks like St Michael's Mount, quaint fishing villages, and dramatic coastal roads make Cornwall a captivating destination for cyclists seeking challenging terrain and picturesque views.

How cycling routes like the National Cycle Network boost local economies by attracting tourism. It shares success stories from businesses across the UK that thrive on the increasing number of cyclists exploring nearby attractions, promoting sustainable travel and regional development.

New Forest Adventures features on cycling through the New Forest emphasizes its tranquil, animal-friendly roads and vibrant landscapes. The writer details personal experiences, from wild camping under starry skies to participating in local sportives, showcasing the New Forest as a serene yet adventurous cycling destination.

Happy cycling

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2025 TRAINING PLAN

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Have you got your 2025 achievements ready to conquer?

You can now create your very own schedule to help you achieve them. Begging of the year is the time for new resolutions, but without a thought timetable your achievements are not likely to proceed further than your instagram story.

Scheduling your own tasks and blocking them within your weekly timetable perhaps is a bit of unnerving task, which is the reason many would prefer the assistance of a professional by buying a book or following an online course.

A pro trainer will easily create your year plan and break it down to days. But it's not the only way. The most famous self-coached athlete is ex-world champion Lizzie Deignan, and she does pretty well for herself.

"A dream becomes a goal when action is taken towards its achievement."

So how do you go about creating your own plan?

Start by looking at your very own calendar

Normally, people would start thinking about what they want to achieve. However, before they do that, they need to look at their own availability. Figure out how much time you can allocate for training daily, weekly, monthly; what activities you will be able to train during that time, and, certainly, location is very important.

Make sure everything is on your timetable - meetings with friends, work-related tasks, trips away - try not to miss any chance you have to add any extra miles into you schedule.

Try to be as honest as you can when scheduling your own tasks. Be realistic about your achievements. Remember, if you put half the effort you will only get half of the result.

Pick a 'First' goal, and 'Second', and 'Third' goals

Now that you've got an idea what your training capacity is, you can think about selecting those big dreams, before turning them into realistic goals.

Gallagher suggests that if you're setting yourself a time based goal, you can be pretty data driven about it if you want.

"With a sportive, or a time trial goal, you can use examples of others. On Strava, you can see the rides of thousands of people who have taken part in an event. If an athlete has a premium account you look at their power to weight on key climbs and equate it back to yourself, to see what is an achievable goal." Naturally, take what you find with a pinch of salt, not many people update their Strava profile if they gain weight.

From here, you can look to choose a the 'Second' goal. Ideally, this will be a few months before the 'First' goal and similar in terrain, discipline and distance so you can use it to look at nutrition and preperation as well as fitness.

A few 'Third' goals aren't a bad idea, to keep you motivated along the way. "A time trial, a hill climb," Gallagher suggests, "something to keep your mind engaged or to see if your threshold power has improved."

For the likes of road racers, it's a bit trickier. It's often said you should never set 'winning a race' as a goal, since it's not controllable (though most of the pre-Grand Tour interviews would suggest otherwise).

"You can only make yourself fit enough to be able to win. Then on the day, it's up to

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your decisions – and luck as well. As long as you hit the start line with the potential to be at the front, and the potential to be up there and go for the win, that's all you can do.”

Naturally, you can adjust your plan to make yourself competitive at the style of race you want to perform well in.

“If it's a flat race, you want to improve your sprint, your leg speed. If it's hilly with two-minute climbs, you want to improve climbing and five minute power. You want to come to a race knowing your fit enough to win, whether you win or not isn't always in your hands.”

One of the hardest elements of planning your own training is periodisation – a system of ensuring that the year builds up to the major goals, in time to peak for the main event.

Traditionally for road cyclists, this means a rest period in late autumn, ‘base miles' in winter, FTP work early in the year followed by ‘sharpening in spring' before a summer of maintenance.

Gallagher isn't so keen: “I would say that method is quite ‘safe'. But that traditional block is starting to go out the window, I rarely use it.

“Most people don't really have enough time to get the sort of volume that would generate enough strain to create a progression. You'd need to be doing at least 10 to 14 hours a week. Otherwise, you need to be doing high intensity training to make yourself stronger.”

Instead, he suggests that you take an honest look at yourself, pick out your weaknesses, and focus on them in six week blocks.

“Periodisation can only happen from meeting objectives at each period. You should be looking to make changes every six weeks, in that time you'll have done enough to see a good ramp in fitness or training.

“Evaluate after each six week block, but be truthful with yourself. Only when you've hit the targets that you set yourself, can you move on to the next block. Don't be afraid to repeat a block.”

Your blocks don't have to be based on power, heart rate or speed – they may be around technique or work off the bike.

“You might want to improve your ability to climb steep gradients,” Gallagher suggests as an example. “That isn't necessarily all about a high peak power, it's about creating power seated.

“So maybe you need to work on neuromuscular strength, and off-the-bike core work. Just be clear what you need to improve on, per block.”

“In each block, prioritise the training sessions that deal with your weaknesses. Then you might have ‘B' training sessions that are a bit more generic – volume, or cadence drills. Then ‘C' training sessions that are low priority – maybe skills sessions that aren't totally relevant to your goal event. If you don't fit them in, don't worry about it.”

Personalise your plan and plot it out clearly

Planning your training means you can be as flexible as you like, though a good coach will adjust days dependant on your lifestyle too. Personal factors such as age will come in to play, “older people would usually need to add in more recovery. It depends on the goal, but high intensity training has been proven to have much bigger benefits for older people than low intensity. And they may want to do more strength work, off the bike, as bone density decreases in later life," Gallagher says.

"Someone in their 20s, perhaps new to cycling, might need to do more volume to build up their base fitness – which someone in their 50s who has been riding a bike for decades won't need as much."

Creating sessions shouldn't be too hard – there's plenty of online resources to give you inspiration.

You can plot them on a calendar or paper diary, but if you're using power or heart rate a training software programme like Training Peaks will crunch the numbers and track metrics like peak power/heart rate outputs as well as fatigue, fitness and form.

Rest is important, too. Most people need at least one rest day a week, though two might enable you to come back fresher.

A traditional approach would be to build volume or intensity for three weeks, then back off on volume by around 50 per cent but maintain some intensity for one. The recovery week might end with some testing, whilst your legs are fresh. Again, bear in mind that you may want to make the blocks between recovery weeks longer or shorter to suit you.

Seek outside help

They key piece of the puzzle that you'll miss without a coach is an outside point of view.

"It's really difficult to be critical and objective and takes a lot of discipline. I'd recommend that at least every six weeks, you speak to someone with experience and bounce ideas of him or her," Gallagher says.

"If there's one thing you should get a second opinion about – a friend, someone in your club – it's illness.

"Training whilst ill, or with the suspicion of illness, can really have a bad effect on you. Not just in cycling, but it can damage general health.

"In most cases, if you think you're getting ill, don't train – if you're coaching yourself, you need to take a step back and be honest with yourself. Better to focus on nutrition, hydration and sleep than going out training and wrecking yourself.

"Unless you're healthy, you can't be fit," he warns.

Getting a coach

So, if we can do it ourselves, why seek out a coach?

Firstly, there's a lot of references to honesty above. This takes discipline and it's easier to lie to yourself than to a coach.

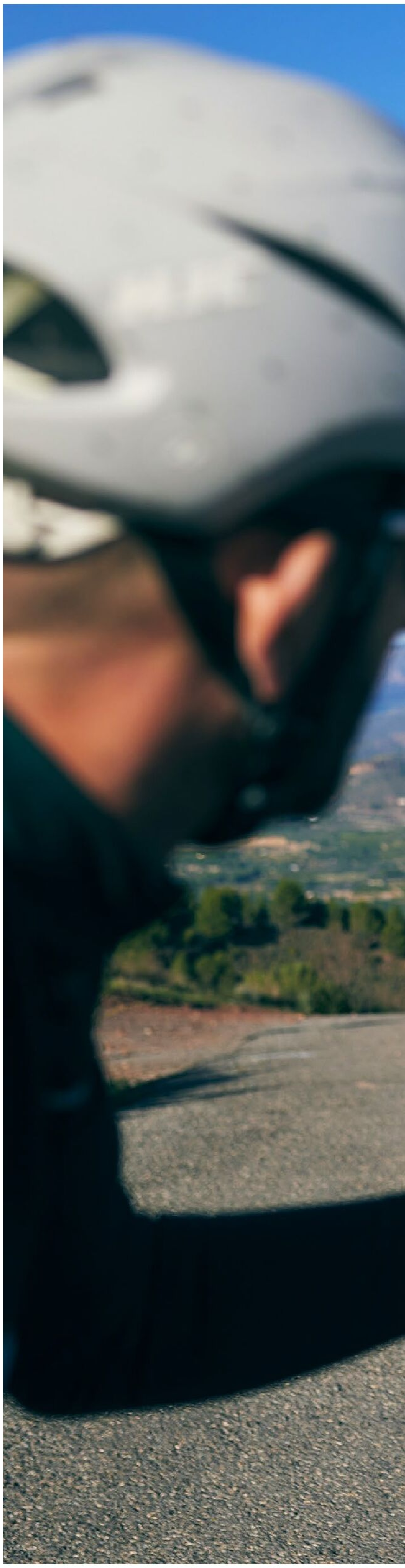
"The new fangled session that's going to boost your race tolerance by 4 percent or 6 percent or whatever – that's all great but it's having somebody who is objectively looking at your information which really helps. For me, that's more important than the actual content of the coaching. A coach can also help you prioritise your lifestyle," Gallagher says.

Secondly, there's accountability in knowing that someone aside from yourself will know if you've completed your sessions. A lot of us know what we should do, but doing it is another struggle.

Finally, he adds one more element: confidence.

"It can give you more confidence in what you're doing and in what you've done. Knowing when you get to the bottom of a climb that you've spent six weeks working on neuromuscular power and six weeks working on muscle strength is massive."

If you're confident in your knowledge and discipline, plan away. If not, a coach could be your answer.



6 AMAZING CYCLING ROUTES FOR 2025

The euphoric sense of achievement that comes from crossing the finish line of a challenging bike race or route is hard to beat, especially when it's situated in one of the world's most scenic locations. But which challenge should you take on and where?

Here's six amazing cycling routes to add to your bucket list for 2025

France Alpe d'Huez, Megavalanche Race

Unlike most time trial enduro races, this legendary run is all about surviving the exhilarating, snow -drenched, downhill run to cross the finish line before anyone else, and there's plenty of competition.

Last year more than 2000 mountain bikers took on this challenging 2600m descent from the Pic Blanc summit to the Allemont valley, racing through alpine forest, over snowy plains and past perilous drops and obstacles.

If you've got the riding skill, stamina and nerves of steel required to take it on, it's the race of a lifetime.

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Canada Whistler Mountain Bike Park

May to October depending on weather conditions in each run Home to four distinct mountainside zones and one indoor training facility, Whistler Mountain Bike Park caters for every kind of mountain biker.

Among each zone, newbies and pros alike can find a track to satisfy the need for adventure and adrenalin. For the ultimate bucket list experience, take a scenic ride up to the fully, lift-serviced peak at 4900m and then race down over 80km of descents lined with jumps, berms, roots and rocks.

Italy Pila Bike Park

June to September depending on weather conditions

This bike park located in the heart of the Italian Alps is the reserve of skiers and snowboarders during the winter but when the snow leaves, bikers arrive to take on the variety of downhill, freeride and stadium routes.

Experienced riders should take a moment to enjoy the breathtaking view from the peak of the Desarpa track at 2100m because once you set-off, your eyes need to stay focussed on the route.

During the 15km descent, you'll have to navigate the turns, berms, obstacles and wildlife that lines the route through stretches of dense Alpine forest and open countryside.

Italy Granfondo Stelvio Santini Race

If you only take on one competitive road race in your lifetime, let this be it. Three uphill courses ranging from the short, 60km (1950m) route to the punishing 151.3km (4058m) ascent all offer outstanding scenery and the opportunity to test your skill, stamina and speed against other riders in this legendary race.

France Mont Ventoux for Race or Recreation Riders

Anytime but conditions are best between May and October

Mont Ventoux is notorious. For race and recreational riders alike it presents a real challenge but the euphoric payoff makes the pain of overcoming it totally worth it.

Known mostly for featuring as a gruelling stage in the Tour de France, Mont Ventoux offers cyclists three paved routes of varied difficulty to reach the summit. No matter how experienced or fit you are, climbing the mixed gradient straights and bends to reach the peak requires stamina and determination.

England Fred Whitton Challenge

This time-trial road race through the towns and countryside of Cumbria is so popular that entrants are often selected by ballot so apply early if you want to compete.

Taking a circular route from Grasmere, this challenging 112 mile course takes you through Keswick, Ennerdale and Eskdale on to the Hardknott and Wrynose passes which, individually, are worthy of a spot on anyone's bucket list on their own, before returning to the start.

With a combination of perilously steep inclines and descents, hairpin sequences, unstable road surfacing and open flats, the Fred Whitton Challenge can be both intensely painful and intensely exhilarating.

E-BIKE PURCHASE GUIDE

We look at how e-bikes work, how much they cost and how far they'll take you.

Need an extra push to get on a bike?

There are many reasons you may prefer an electric bicycle to a pedal-powered model.

LEOCURR
ZEPHYR

Why would I want an electric bicycle?

You live in a hilly area.

You're not all that fit or you have limited mobility.

You want to be able to take off more easily from an intersection.

You want to keep up with traffic and other cyclists.

You don't want to get all sweaty – particularly if your workplace doesn't have shower facilities.

How do electric bikes work?

Most electric bikes work by assisting your pedal movement as you are riding – so you still have to do at least some of the grunt work. The motor cuts in when your speed drops below a certain level, giving you that little extra push. You won't get pedal-assist beyond about 18mph.

Some electric bikes have a throttle, so you don't have to pedal at all, and some have both throttle and pedal assist.

How much do electric bikes cost?

Electric bikes aren't cheap. They range from £995 for a conversion kit for your existing bike to more than £3000 for a ready-made cycle with all the trimmings such as lights, racks and panniers. They generally come with guards for wheels and the chain, making bike commuting a cleaner prospect.

How much do electric bicycles weigh?

Whether you use a conversion kit to turn your current bike into an electric version or buy an electric bike ready-made, you're going to end up with a heavier-than-average set of wheels – up to 27kg for a ready-made bicycle.

How long does the battery last and how far will they get me?

Most electric bikes have lithium-ion battery packs with 8Ah-14Ah capacity, and voltage from 24V-36V. They range from 200W-250W – you need a licence for anything more powerful.

Electric bikes only get you so far before needing a recharge. Some claim a limit of 20 miles, while others claim up to a more impressive 60 miles between charges. Most give a broad claim because it depends on a number of variables.

As a general guide:

A 36V 10Ah battery (360Wh), which is a very common capacity for an electric bike, will take you 30 miles using the highest level of assistance or 60 miles using the lowest level of assistance.

A 36V 9Ah battery (324Wh) will provide about 20-60miles.

A 36V 14Ah battery (504Wh) should take you 30-70miles.

Hills, headwinds and carrying a lot of weight drain the battery further, and using a throttle drains the battery more quickly than a pedal-assist system does.

You can expect the batteries to last for about 500 charges, and replacements cost between £395 and £550.

Typical recharge time is four to six hours. If you charge only partially, this does not count as a full recharge but a fraction of a full charge. Check the manual for proper battery charge maintenance.

Size

While electric bikes are gaining traction in the cycle market, there are some height limitations. Taller riders may find their choices limited.

What to look for in an electric bike

If you're thinking of buying an electric bike, most of the tips in our bicycle buying guide will still be useful to you.

It's also worth taking the following features into consideration:

Front hub motor

This means easier maintenance if you need to remove the wheel for a puncture. Rear hub motors can be quite complex for maintenance.

Higher watt motor

This means more torque or take-off potential from a standing start. All will be set from 200-250W for legal reasons, but a 350W motor limited to 250W will give greater torque than a 250W motor.

Throttle

A throttle is useful if you want to take a break from pedalling or need help taking off from a standing start. However, this drains the battery faster than just pedal-assist. A combination of throttle capability and pedal-assist may be best.

Weight

Electric bikes are heavy – up to 27kg because of that battery. Remember to take this into account, because if you need to push it after a puncture or you run out of charge on a big hill – you'll be pushing a lot of weight.

Tyres

Puncture-resistant tyres will save you from having to change as many flats – a particular hassle if you have a rear hub motor or if you struggle with the weight of the bike.

Accessories

A helmet is a legal requirement when riding a bicycle of any kind. Lights, hi-visibility clothing, locks, a pump, mudguards, a chain guard, racks and panniers are extras worth considering, although remember they all add weight.

EBIKE THROUGH IRELAND

Co Leitrim, located in the North West of Ireland has a landscape dotted with hills and valleys and is surrounded by mountains and lakes.

There is a myriad of quiet country roads and lanes in this sparsely populated County that is ideal for either the cycling enthusiast or those who wants to escape the maddening crowd and rejuvenate the body and soul.

Seamus and Eileen from Electric Bike Trails realised this fact and started a bike hire business in their native Leitrim Village in 2012. Leitrim Village is located in the heart of the Shannon Blueway with canal pathways going north and east from the village, as well as being on the banks of the magnificent River Shannon. The network of canals built in the 1900s for boat navigation are now being recognised and developed as a hive of outdoor adventure activity from stand up paddling, canoeing, kayaking to walking and cycling along the banks.

Electric Bike Trails, as the name suggests, have seen the real potential for cycling for everybody with the provision of electric bike hire. We use the German brand Kalkhoff Electric Bikes which have proven to take people over the toughest mountain ranges without any real effort. You do have to pedal all the time but these fantastic bikes kick in with the motor sensor and give you a boost of power when you feel you need it. With these bikes cycling is no longer an activity for the super fit. Electric Bike Trails also stock a large range of regular hybrid bikes, children’s bikes, child carts and child seats and even a few tandems for a real laugh as you try to synchronise your pedalling with that of your partner. The service we provide includes all the cycling equipment such as helmets, hi-vis vests, pannier bags, bike locks as well as specially selected trail maps to allow you to self-guide with ease.

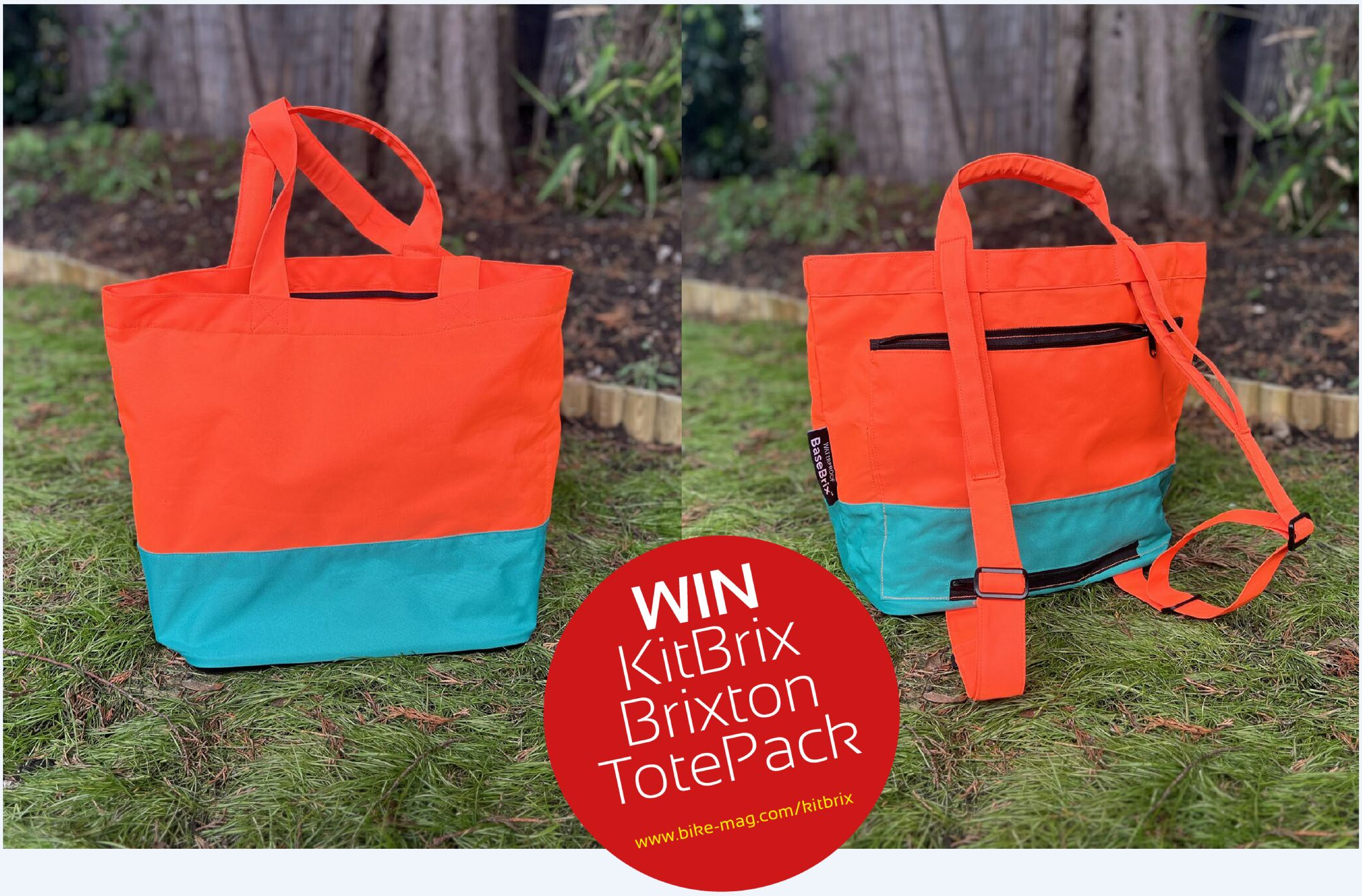
The cycle trails vary from easy cycles along the canal banks, ideal for families with small children, to longer distances from 15 km to 65 km. One of our most popular trails is across Kilronan Mountain and Arigna Mountain to the highly-acclaimed Arigna Mining Experience where you get to marvel at the panoramic views over Lough Allen and Sliabh an Iarainn (The Iron Mountain), as well as taking an underground tour of the old Arigna Mines with an ex-miner as a guide. There is a mining museum and a coffee shop to fritter away another hour or two before you hop on board your bike for the mostly downhill cycle back to base. This 36 km ride can be enjoyed at your ease over the course of a day with a detour to see the River Shannon as it flows from Lough Allen at the hydrometric dam at Bellantra Bridge, with a picturesque return along the Shannon Blueway to Leitrim Village.

Other day tours include a short cycle around the Fairy Hill (Sheemore) which is renowned for its stories of fairies having a massive battle between the hills of Sheemore and Sheebeg, hills made famous in a tune by Turlough O Carolan, the blind harper that wandered the lands of Leitrim in the 18th Century. If you are feeling really energetic you can cycle in the path of legends as you cross over Sliabh an Iarainn, the home of Tuatha De Danann. They were reputedly a race of small dark people who fled into the more inaccessible regions of the country. It is supposedly from these battle shy little people that the myth of fairies and leprechauns emanated. This tour is best taken as a guided tour with a freshly-prepared picnic lunch at a hidden waterfall location.

Here at Electric Bike Trails we like to provide you with a great cycling experience that will have you raving about the beauty and hospitality of the area. Whether it's good food, traditional Irish heritage or the best of local culture you are interested in Electric Bike Trails have it all here in abundance. We will give you loads of tips to make your trip a memorable experience. Back up transport is available if required so no need to worry about a thing. We also offer bike delivery to local accommodation.

Apart from day hire there are two to eight day tours available. There is a Castle to Castle tour where you stay at the four star Kilronan Castle Estate and Spa Hotel and Lough Rynn Castle and Gardens Hotel, cycle through the heart of Co Leitrim and Electric Bike Trails will take care of your luggage. There's a three day Shannon Highlands Tour including glamping accommodation in a Yurt at Pink Apple Orchard overlooking Lough Allen. For the more experienced cyclist there is an eight day Lakelands to Wild Atlantic Way Tour with B&B accommodation and luggage transfer.

Electric Bike Trails also have a bike hire base at Lough Key Forest and Activity Park, Boyle Co Roscommon. There is an eight km traffic free cycle path through natural woodland to enjoy which is very popular for a family fun cycle. Bikes can be hired by the hour during the spring/summer season from Easter to the end of September.



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Brixton TotePack

The Brixton TotePack by KitBrix is an innovative and versatile bag designed to cater to the needs of active individuals. Here's an overview of its key features and benefits:

The Brixton TotePack is a hybrid bag that functions both as a tote and a backpack. This dual functionality makes it incredibly versatile, allowing users to switch between carrying styles based on their needs. The bag is available in four color options: Black, Country, Sighting, and Aqua, catering to different style preferences.

Constructed from 100% recycled RPET fabric, which is made from plastic bottles, the Brixton TotePack is both eco-friendly and durable. The material is water-resistant, ensuring that your belongings stay dry even in wet conditions. The bag also features KitBrix's signature waterproof BaseBrix™, which allows it to be placed on any surface without getting the bottom wet.

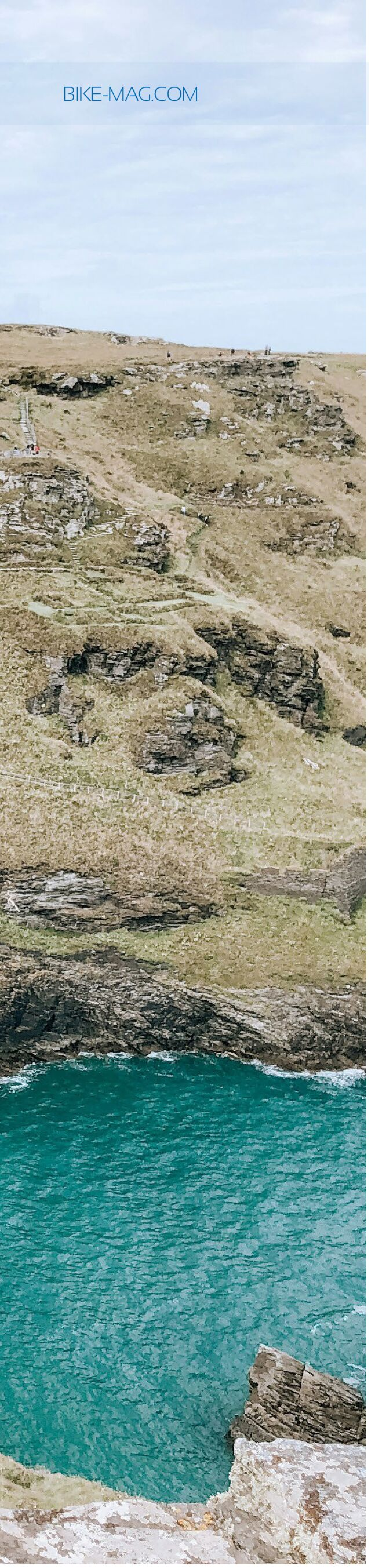
The Brixton TotePack offers ample storage space with multiple compartments to keep your items organized. It includes a wet/dry zip pouch, perfect for separating gym clothes, dirty shoes, or groceries. There is also a zipped outer pocket designed to hold a laptop, and an internal bottle holder to keep your drink secure. Additionally, the bag has a zipped pouch for valuables and a clasp for keys, ensuring that all your essentials are easily accessible.

The bag is designed with user comfort in mind. It features adjustable padded straps for use as a backpack, and sturdy handles for carrying it as a tote. This flexibility makes it suitable for various activities, from commuting and traveling to gym sessions and outdoor adventures. The bag is lightweight, which adds to its portability and ease of use.

The Brixton TotePack includes several thoughtful features that enhance its functionality. It can carry a yoga or Pilates mat, making it ideal for fitness enthusiasts. The bag also folds flat, which is convenient for packing it as an extra bag when traveling. Its robust construction and practical design ensure that it can handle the demands of an active lifestyle.

The Brixton TotePack by KitBrix is a well-designed, versatile, and durable bag that offers excellent value for money. Its combination of eco-friendly materials, ample storage, and dual functionality makes it a great choice for anyone looking for a reliable and stylish bag for their daily activities.
www.get-kitbrix.com

CYCLING CORNWALL



Think of Cornwall located on a peninsula tumbling into the vast Atlantic Ocean and scenic fishing villages, sweeping expanses of golden beaches and blue waters spring to mind.

Head to the far west of the county and you'll find Cornwall at its most rural and rugged – as its most native may say. A large part of the peninsula here was once an island, and even though nowadays joined to the mainland, a feeling of individuality remains. Heathland covers the granite outcrops and the area is scattered with remnants of an incredibly ancient heritage. As you slip off the edge of the map into rocky gorges where tiny fishing villages face a wild ocean it's as if you have slipped off the edge of time where Cornwall reveals its most individual and captivating side.

The coastal and serene ingredients make for perfect cycling conditions. Throw in more than a fair few undulating hills and hairpin bends and it starts to get interesting. This is where 2016 JLT-Condor signing, Steve Lampier, comes to train on the West Cornwall Loop, popular with local cyclists and part of the Land's End 100. This 100 mile sportive takes place in October each year and tours some of the most picturesque parts of Cornwall.

Starting out in the ancient market town of Marazion the route heads to the UK's most southerly point, the Lizard Peninsula, and then cuts across Cornwall to the north coast. It then follows coastal roads with breath-taking views out to sea to the most westerly point, Land's End, before heading back to Marazion.

What to see and do along the way...

St Michael's Mount

Just off the coast of Marazion, this iconic landmark rises dramatically from the bay. A former Benedictine Priory, here lies thousands of years of incredible history brought to life with a tour of the medieval castle which is still home to a modern family.

www.stmichaelsmount.co.uk

The Lizard

The rare geology of the area creates a haven for exceptional plants and flowers. Around the coastline you'll find little fishing ports with huge granite sea walls to protect from the Atlantic gales and gorgeous sandy bays with jagged black rocks jutting out in to the sea.

Eat Grab a window seat with uninterrupted harbour views at Rick Stein's Porthleven outcrop. Here the freshest of local seafood comes with an international kick inspired by Rick Stein's travels. https://www.rickstein.

com/eat-with-us/porthleven/

Do Visit the Lizard Lighthouse and find out more about maritime history in the visitor centre and enjoy the views from the top of the lighthouse.

http://www.trinityhouse.co.uk/lighthouses/lighthouse_list/lizard.html

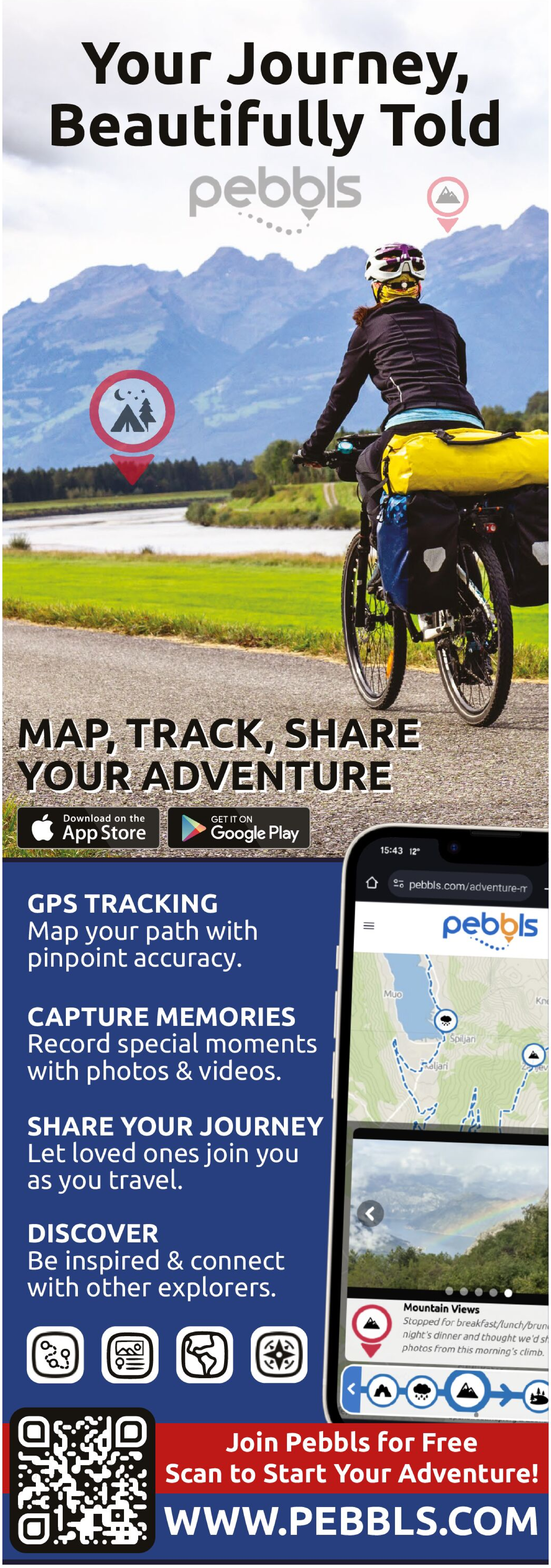
St Ives

A picturesque fishing village with an artistic flair. Follow the winding streets to the town centre which surrounds a scenic harbour and explore St Ives' warren of back streets which hide a mixture of galleries, cafes and stylish art stores. You will stumble across many working artists taking inspiration from the surroundings and making the most of the quality of natural light.

Eat Call into one of the many Cornish pasty shops lining the harbour and enjoy a taste of Cornwall's finest export with sand between your toes on the beach – just watch out for the seagulls who find pasties rather hard to resist!

Do Explore Tate St Ives sitting in a spectacular gallery overlooking the Blue Flag beach of Porthmeor. The Cornish branch of this national art museum lives up to its city counterparts epitomising why St Ives is a mecca for worldwide acclaimed artists.

www.tate.org.uk/stives/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St Just Mining District

Much of the stretch of coast between St Ives and Land's End has been bestowed World Heritage Site status for its mining history. Head underground for a tour of Geevor Tin Mine or visit Levant Mine to experience the landscape made famous by BBC's Poldark series.

www.geevor.com

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/levant-mine-and-beam-engine

Land's End

The most westerley point of Cornwall famous for its unique location and stunning scenery. Get a photo under the iconic Land's End signpost and be inspired by the End to End interactive tribute to the adventurers who have made the remarkable journey from Land's End to John O'Groats (or vice versa) covering the entire length of Great Britain.

www.landsend-landmark.co.uk

Eat A favourite pit stop for cyclists is the Apple Tree Café just a stones throw from Land's End. Refuel with a Cornish Cream Tea or a handmade lunch.

www.theappletreecafe.co.uk

Porthcurno

With gorgeous fine soft white sand washed by a sea that turns turquoise in the sun and high cliffs on both sides providing shelter, Porthcurno is an oasis of stunning natural beauty

Do Visit Minack Theatre, the most famous cliff side theatre in Britain, and enjoy a performance under the stars. Call into the Telegraph Museum to discover Cornwall's hidden communication history and the role Porthcurno played in connecting Britain to the world.

www.minack.com

www.porthcurno.org.uk

Cycle-friendly places to stay

BIKE Directory

http://www.bike-mag.com/directory/

LAND'S END TO JOHN O'GROATS

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O'GR
ORKNEY 8m SHETLAND 152m

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A nation-long, bicycle book Tour by Anna Hughes

The journey from Land's End to John O'Groats is a well-ridden one; thousands of cyclists ride this route every year, many for charity, some simply for the challenge, and they ride in all guises, fully supported, fully laden, in groups, solo, lightweight, cargo bikes, Bromptons. This September, it was my turn. I decided I would take on the famous route as a book tour, promoting my book Eat, Sleep, Cycle about my ride four years previously around the coast of Britain.

It's roughly 1000 miles from end to end, and I would take my time, spending the whole month making my way up the middle of Britain, giving talks and selling my book in each of the places I passed through. The pedalling pedlar.

The trip was planned meticulously, with an event to be held in almost every stopping point: twenty events in total. I had spent two months planning and confirming and promoting the events, leaving nothing to chance. I had booked a sleeper train to Penzance, dusted off my old touring bike, and packed everything I would need into my panniers. I wanted a nice outfit each night for the talks, so the idea was to buy a dress in a charity shop in each location and donate it to another the next day. I had sourced a huge pile of vegan snacks from Riverbank Bakery as I knew that these would be hard to come by in the far reaches of the UK. Everything was set. Then, four days prior to departure, I received a phone call telling me my train to Penzance had been cancelled, and the following day, I dropped a D lock on my foot and broke my toe.

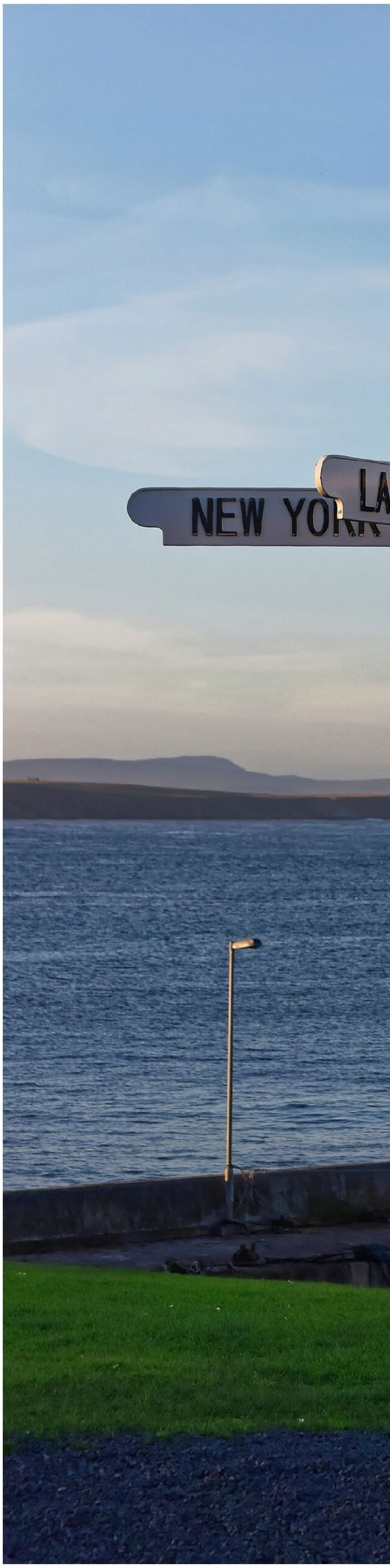
A few frantic phone calls to doctors and train companies later, I was on my way, toe strapped up, limping to the start line at Land's End. A large crowd of cyclists was there, ready for their End to End ride, with their lycra, their road bikes, and their luggage safely stowed in the support van. "Are you riding to John O'Groats?" they asked. "With all that stuff? Rather you than me!" I smiled with false confidence, but quietly I worried. Would I be able to ride with my broken toe? What if no one came to my events? Where would I stay? Would I be able to stick to my vegan diet? How would I manage the hills?

But, once the cycling had started, none of that mattered. Yes, the hills were tough, very tough in fact, much tougher than I had remembered. The last time I was there had been eight weeks into my round-the-coast journey, with eight weeks of hill-climbing practice behind me. This time, I had no practice, just determination and the vague notion that I should keep on pushing. But I learned to climb them again, my muscles gradually adapting to life back in the saddle, and with that I remembered the beauty of cycle touring, the simplicity and freedom of keeping the pedals turning. Niggles iron themselves out. "What did I need to know that the road wouldn't teach me?" I ask in my book, and there I was, discovering what it meant all over again.

I quickly settled into my routine. I would wake in my tent, pack my simple belongings onto my bike, and set off in search of breakfast. I would ride between forty and fifty miles to my destination, find the venue for the event, find an outfit, await my audience, and start talking. I spoke in cycle cafes, bookshops and church halls. Some nights I spoke to sell out audiences, some to just a handful of people. Once I had a surprise visit from two of my hosts from the round-Britain trip. Each evening people would thank me for inspiring them to explore Britain more - exactly the purpose of having written the book and taken it on tour in the first place.

"What was the best part?" It's a common question, and one almost impossible to answer. Certain points stick in my mind. A wrong turning just five miles from Land's End saw me reaching a dead end at Lamorna Cove, so instead of grumbling I went swimming. There's something magical about swimming in the sea, something I had wanted to do daily when cycling round the coast trip but hadn't managed to, so it was an utter pleasure to find that cove and take the time to go for a dip. It was followed with a swim off Plymouth Hoe the next day, and one in the River Dart the next. After my Truro event I had my first UK 'wild' camping experience, in the grounds of a National Trust property which had closed for the night, where I arrived after dark, with no clue of the view that might greet me in the morning, only knowing I was pitched beside a river for the flashing of navigation buoys in the darkness. I awoke to the mist rising through the trees and the quiet co-cooing of wood pigeons.

On day six I picked up an old railway trail, the Strawberry Line, just outside Wells. This marked the start of around 30 miles of traffic-free cycling, followed as it was by the Colliers Way, then the Two Tunnels Greenway, on the old trackbed of the Somerset and Dorset railway which passes beneath the huge hills at Combe Down and Lyncombe on its



JOHN O'GROATS
NDS END 874m
ORKNEY 8m SHETLAND 152m

way to Bath. Approaching the tunnel entrance was daunting - at over a mile long, the Combe Down tunnel is the longest cycling and walking tunnel in the UK - but lights throughout and a music installation partway through made it a pleasant, if eerie, experience. Then onwards along the Bristol-Bath railway path: the old Midland railway along which horses had once pulled coal carts. These were the remnants of the railways that were closed in the 1960s by a certain Dr. Beeching when they ceased to be profitable. When the axe fell, a group of Sustrans volunteers began work to convert the Bath to Bristol trail into a shared-use path for cyclists and walkers - the very first route on what was to become the National Cycle Network.

The ride from Bristol was a particular highlight, along the Avon gorge and beneath the iconic Clifton Suspension Bridge to Avonmouth, where the vista opened up to reveal the wide waters of the Severn and the two Severn bridges striding across from England to Wales. The suspension bridge has a separate track for cyclists so it was this that I crossed, marvelling at the sunlight on the waters below, the views down the estuary, and the feat of engineering that allowed me to soar so high above the river. From there I continued northwards, criss-crossing between England and Wales through Tintern and Monmouth along the luscious Wye valley.

Each place had something remarkable about it: Hereford's lovely cathedral, the winding River Severn in Shrewsbury, the Tudor buildings in Chester, the Transpennine Trail that led me traffic free almost all of the way from Warrington into the centre of Manchester. While rain poured down in London, I pedalled from Lancaster into the Lake District under a piercing blue sky. I rode at the foot of slopes with peaks of light brown and grey, the green fields below spotted with a scattering of grazing sheep and a grey scribbling of stone walls. Past Windermere, Rydale, Grasmere, Thirlmere and Derwent Water, the road undulated along the water's edge, an utterly spectacular panorama of peaks lining the view on all sides. From Bassenthwaite Lake it was an ascent of several hours to the Uldale Commons, that wild, rugged landscape where the wind roams freely and sheep wander across the path, then a ten mile descent into Carlisle.

I passed into Scotland at Gretna Green, in almost the exact spot that I'd left the country on the round-Britain trip. That border crossing had been so significant, my time in Scotland

LAND'S END
NEW YORK 3147
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having shaped so much of my journey, a place where I had gone from touring novice to confident traveller. So it was wonderful to be back, to explore some more of this country, and it didn't disappoint: Scotland is fabulous for cycling. From the busy metropolis of Glasgow to the bonnie banks of Loch Lomond, to the spectacular pass of Glencoe and up the Great Glen Way, I relished each mile, the lowlands gradually building towards wild mountain passes and thrilling descents. I camped in Fort William and Lairg and finally Thurso, pitching up after dark right next to the bay, where the sound of the waves on the rocks lulled me to sleep. I awoke to see the sun rise over the water, then I was off for the final miles to John O'Groats, and a long-awaited detour to Dunnet Head.

Dunnet Head was one compass point that I'd by-passed on the round-Britain trip, not having had the chance to ride to the tip of the peninsula then, the most northerly point of mainland Britain. But here I was, striking out across the windswept farmland, the sun at my back, each pedal stroke overflowing with excitement to finally be there. I knew what I'd find: one of Stevenson's lighthouses sitting squat near the edge of the cliff, and a headstone letting me know that I was as far north as I could possibly be. And there it was, exactly as I had imagined, predictable yet extraordinary, with a breathtakingly clear view of Orkney across a rich blue sea.

The approach to John O'Groats was less euphoric - exhaustion had begun to set in and the road seemed never ending, each village that came and went a teasing prelude to that which would signal the end of my journey. But eventually it came, and down to the water's edge I went, to where the famous signpost stood pointing all that way back to Land's End. I had my photograph taken then sat in the tea rooms eating my soup, feeling something of an anti-climax. That was it. All over. This point had been in my mind since day one, whenever anyone has asked where I was riding, whenever I wrote my blog or arrived at a venue with one of my posters displayed on the door: "Anna Hughes is riding from Land's End to John O'Groats!" Well, I was, but not anymore. Now what?

And so it is with long trips, the jumble of emotions that comes at the end, the exhaustion, the elation, the glow of achievement, the sadness that it's all over, the quiet gloom of returning to real life. One of my motivations for cycling around Britain was to discover the extraordinary in the ordinary, to discover the unfamiliar in a place that was quite familiar. And the same was true of this trip, to have a wonderful adventure without leaving home. I think I achieved it.

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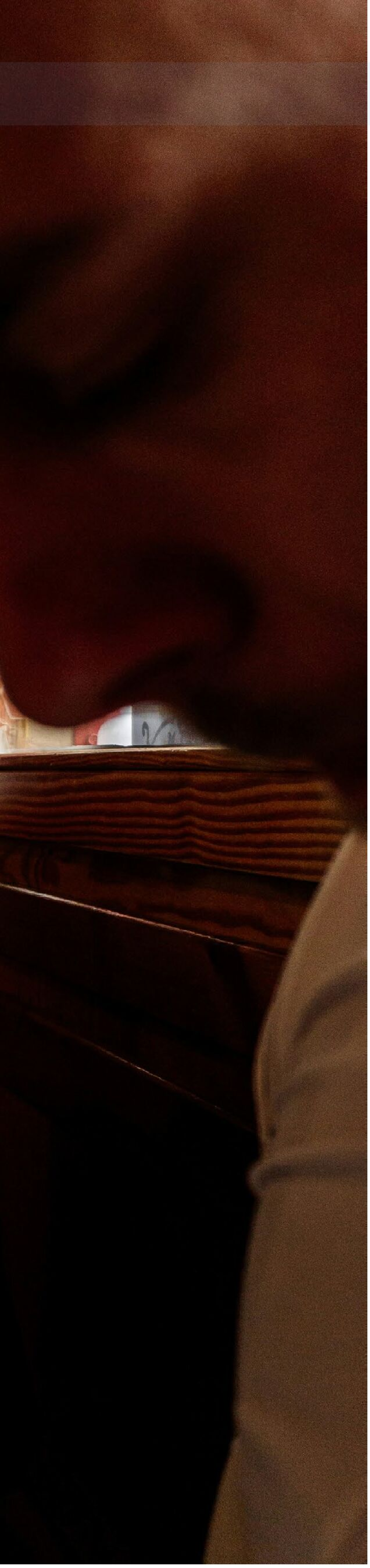
ADVENTUROUS CYCLISTS



Joanna Corfield of Sustrans on the beauty and benefits of the **National Cycle Network**

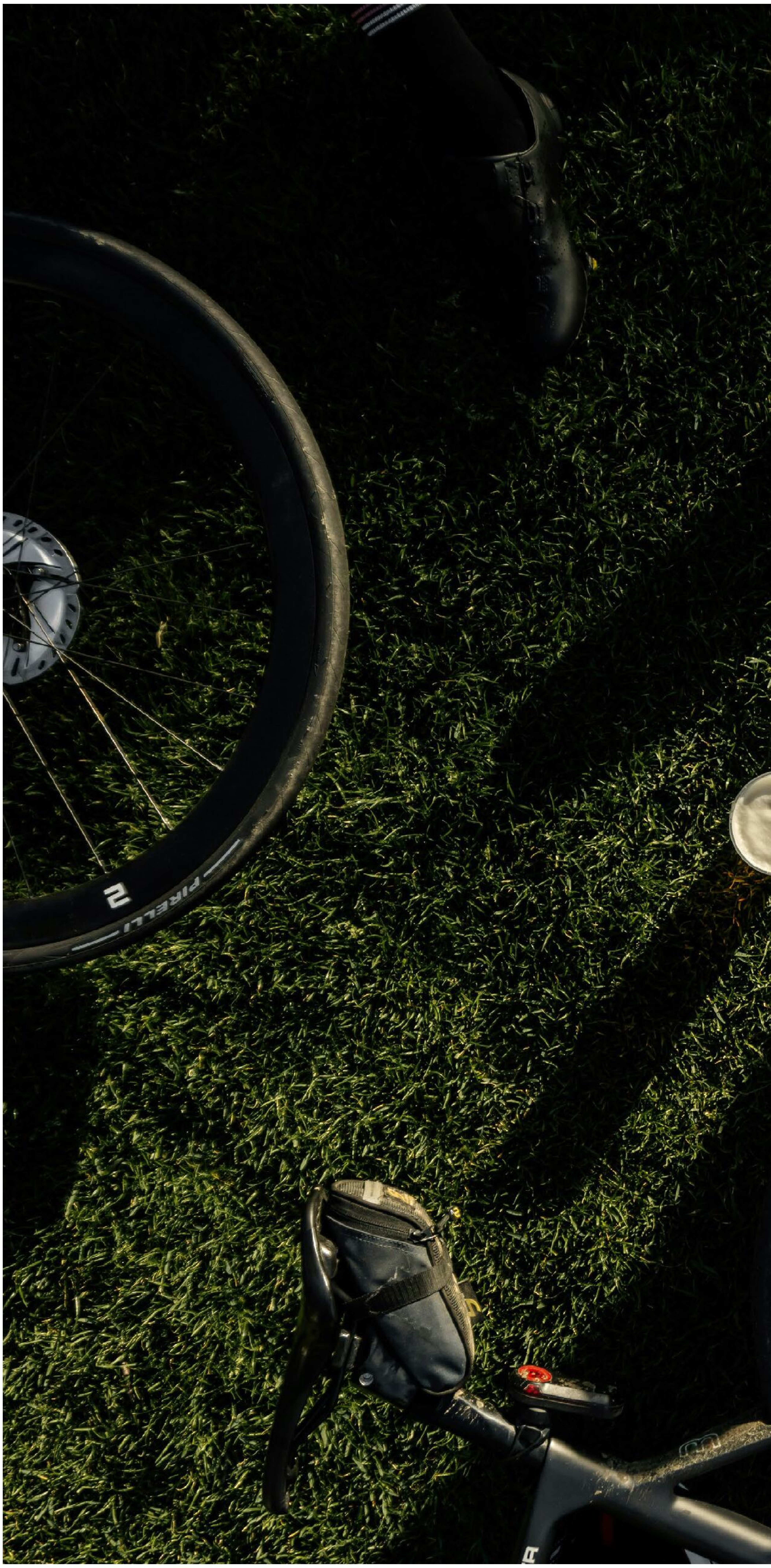
As any seasoned cyclist will tell you, one of the highlights of cycling in the UK is the pit stops you get to make along the way. From cream teas to fish and chips, pasties to deep-fried Mars Bars, these isles are full of tasty treats for hungry cyclists. These indulgences are your reward for a morning of hard pedalling, but it's also a chance to take in your surroundings and experience some local culture. Many of the UK's cycle routes pass by shops, pubs and cafes but they can also lead you to historic sites, churches, grand houses and museums. So keep one eye on the road and the other searching for stop-offs, because you never know what you might be whizzing past.

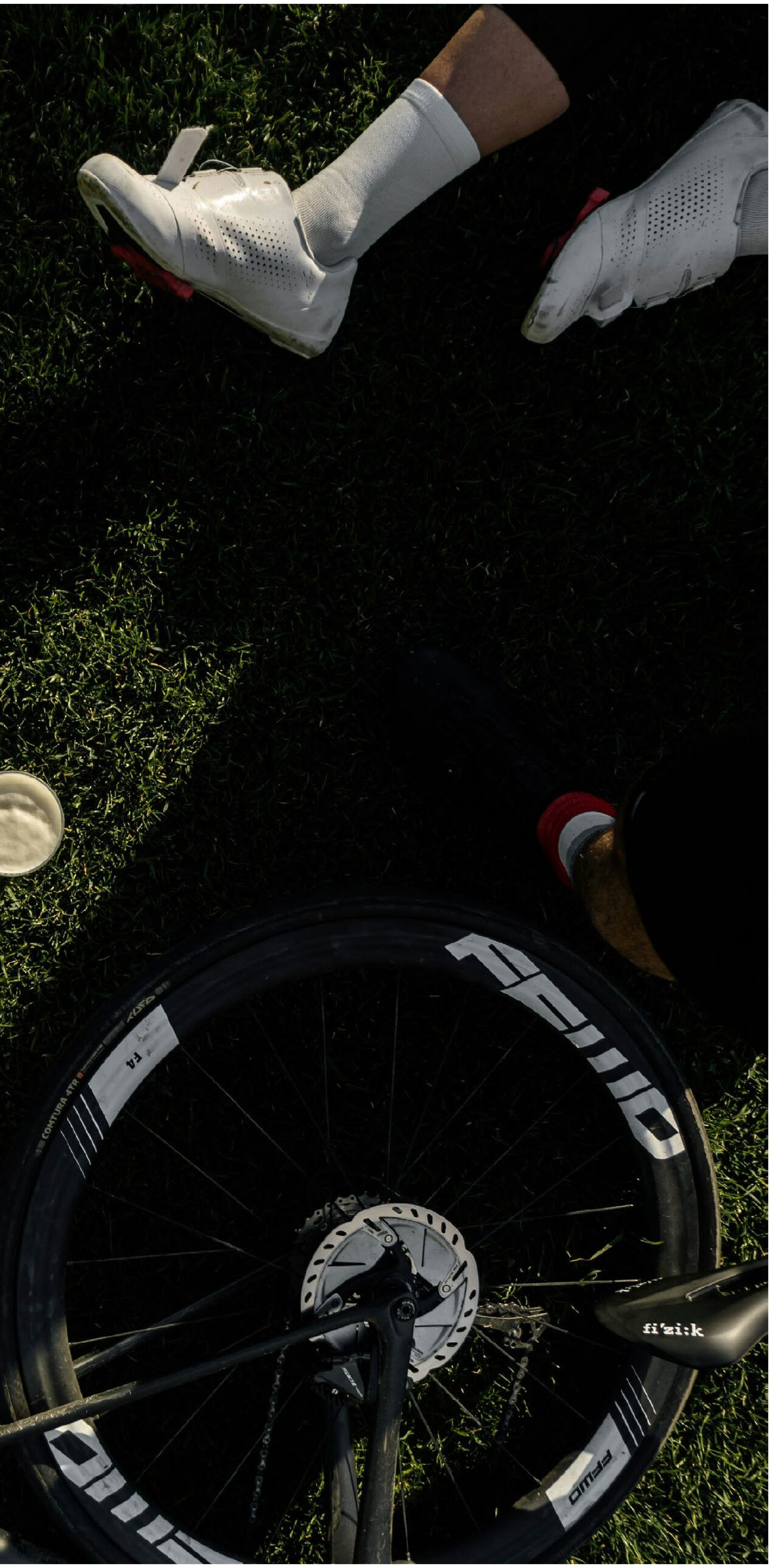
The National Cycle Network - a 14,000 mile network of traffic-free and quiet on-road cycling routes - passes by thousands of attractions. The routes are connected to National Trust properties, Woodland Trust sites, RSPB reserves and run through National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Network is so well connected that more and more people are using it as a way of getting to attractions, and this increase in cycle tourism is benefiting local economies around the country. It's estimated that people who use the Network for holidays and day trips spend an average of £9 a day - although this figure is likely to be even higher for people who take cycling holidays.

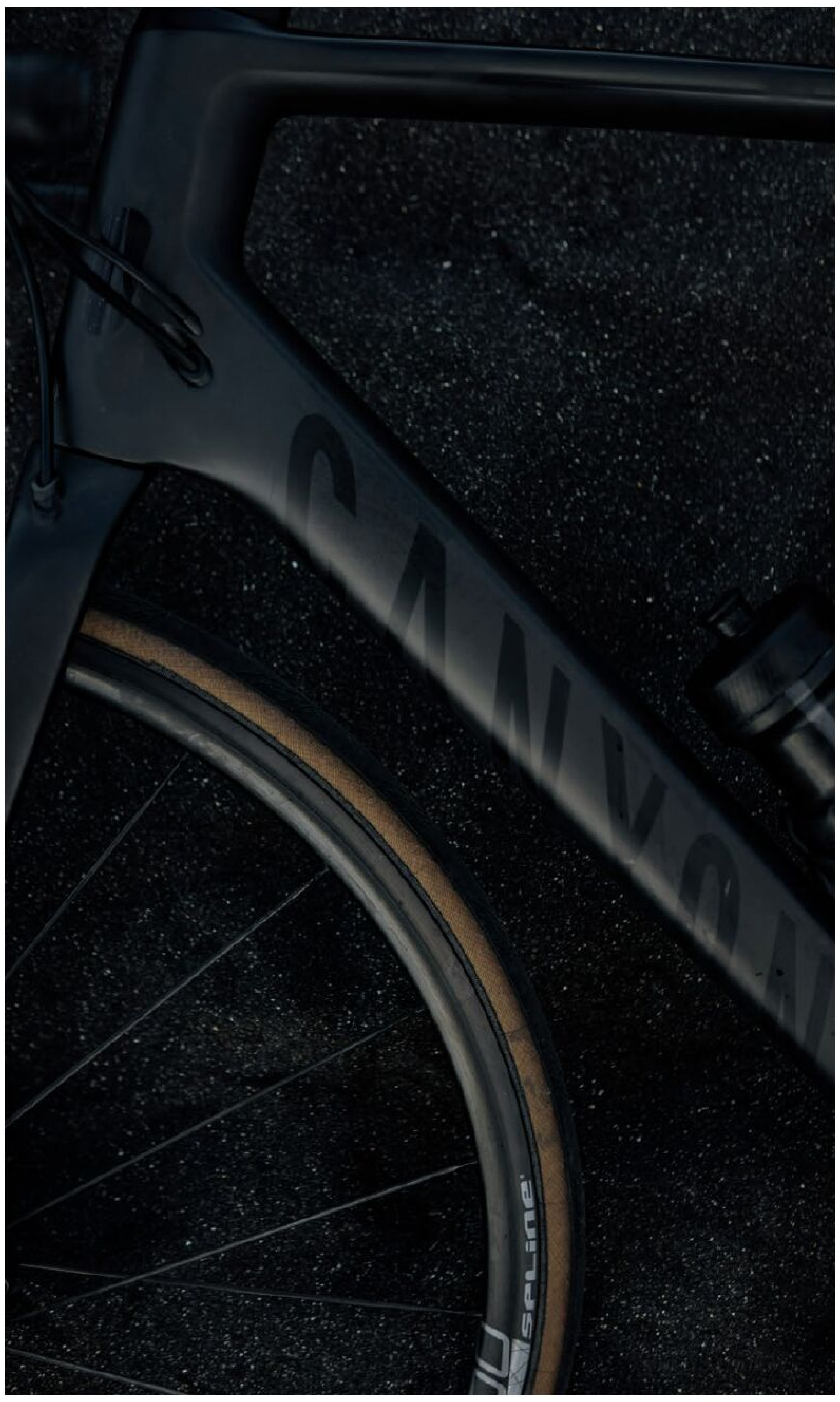
Sustrans, which created the National Cycle Network twenty years ago, estimates that people cycling on the routes bring over £650 million to the UK economy each year. The charity's research claims that the National Cycle Network directly support 15,262 full time equivalent jobs across the services industry, particularly in the food and drink sector where it supports over 10,000 jobs. This means that across the country, there are hundreds, if not thousands of businesses which are benefitting from new cycling routes.

In Worcester, a new bridge across the River Severn near Diglis Island opened up the city centre and riverside to cyclists. One example is the Diglis House Hotel, which has seen a 20% increase in their bar and restaurant sales since the route opened. Steve Pirone, who is the General Manager at the hotel, said: "The riverside is a very important part of the tourism industry in Worcester but until the bridge was built there was no way for people on bikes or on foot to get from one side to the other. As a result of the bridge being built we have experienced a real benefit and I'm sure other businesses near the route have seen an increase in business too."

Meanwhile, in North Yorkshire, Fountains Abbey is also experiencing the benefit of welcoming cyclists through their doors, thanks to the Abbey's position next to the Way of the Roses route. The Abbey, a National Trust property and UNESCO World Heritage site, sees up to 170 cyclists a day passing through on summer weekends. The Trust estimate that 35 per cent of the passing cyclists stop and spend on average £7.50 in their café, that's nearly £30,000 of additional income each year.

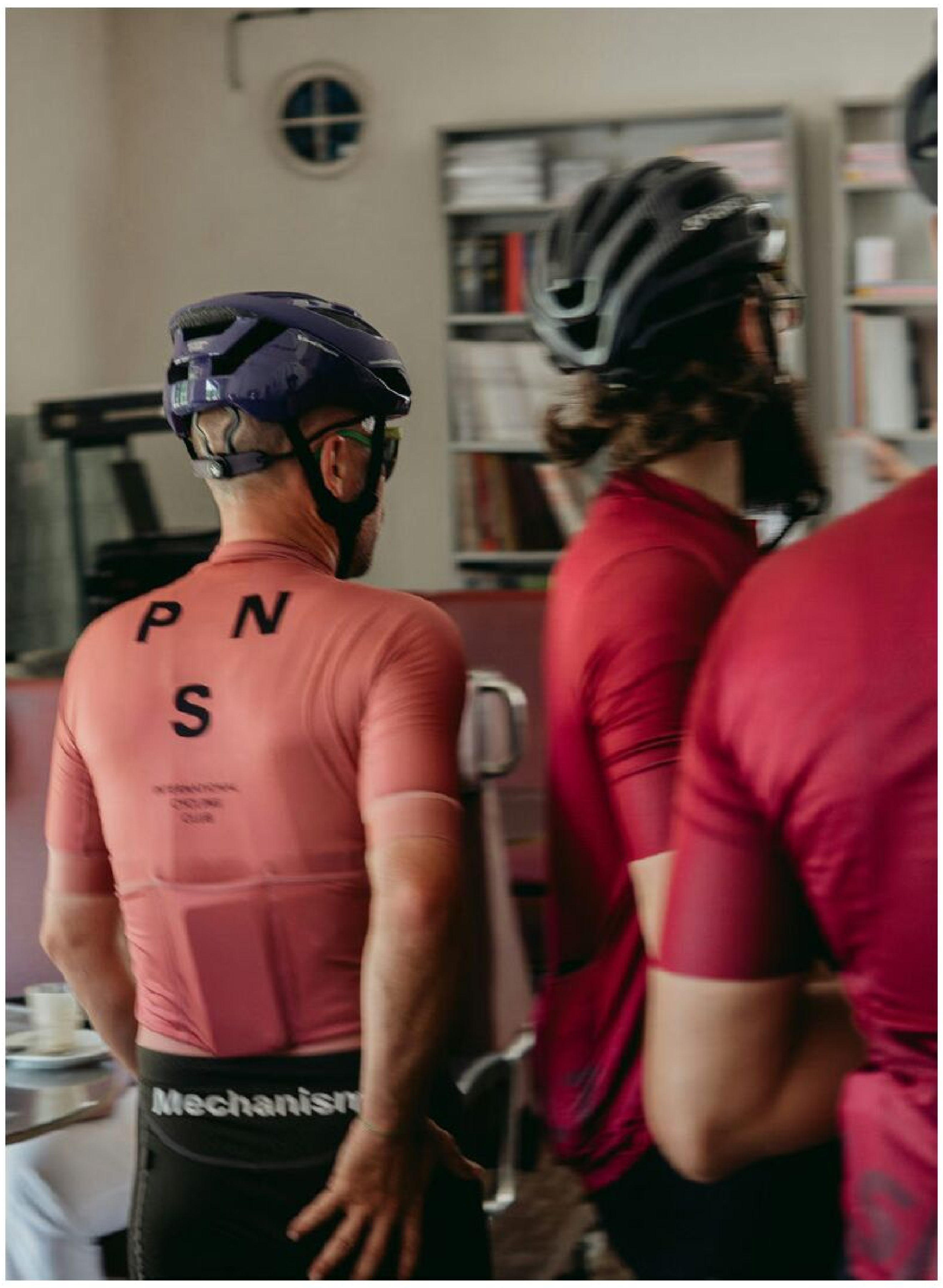






Alexa Morton, Visitor Experience & Marketing Manager, said: “We’ve always been happy to welcome cyclists to Fountains but since we were included on the ‘Way of the Roses’ route in 2010, we’ve seen an unprecedented increase in the number of people arriving at the Abbey on two wheels. The impact has been threefold: cycling has reduced pressure on our car parking facilities; it’s helped to reduce traffic and pollution around the site; finally it has increased the café’s income - because cyclists are always hungry and thirsty! As a world heritage site we try to ensure as many people as possible can enjoy this special place be they cyclists, families or dog walkers enjoying the route through the deer park.”

It’s not just pre-existing businesses who have benefited from new cycling routes; some entrepreneurs were clever enough to spot the cycling boom coming and launch businesses to meet cyclists needs. In Cornwall, Nigel Wiggett started Bridge Bike Hire in Wadebridge in 1983 with six folding bikes, today the company is based in a warehouse containing 400 hire bikes that are used year round.



Nigel, said: "With the development of the Camel Trail in the 1980s and then the National Cycle Network in 1995, cycling in the area really took off and has had a massive impact on the local economy. Along with that we employ two full time mechanics and during peak season we have 20 members of staff. Interestingly we are busy all year round; winter is actually as busy as summer which is quite unique in the tourism sector and really important to the local economy."

Liz Hodges, another cycling entrepreneur in Devon set up the Route 2 bike café in Topsham and now runs the Route 2 bike Shop in the same town. Liz, said: "We set up the Route 2 café after the National Cycle Network route 2 was developed in 2008. I knew cycling would be popular but I never expected the cycling revolution that we are seeing today. The National Cycle Network has definitely been key to getting more people out on their bikes for day trips and holidays. And the 'Wiggins effect' has also been important. Lots of businesses have benefitted and in my case allowed me to reinvent myself in a completely new career."

Considering which stop-offs to take on a ride is an essential part of planning a weekend cycling trip or long-distance adventure. To help you decide on your destination, Sustrans has picked some of the tops routes in the country which have great stop-offs nearby.

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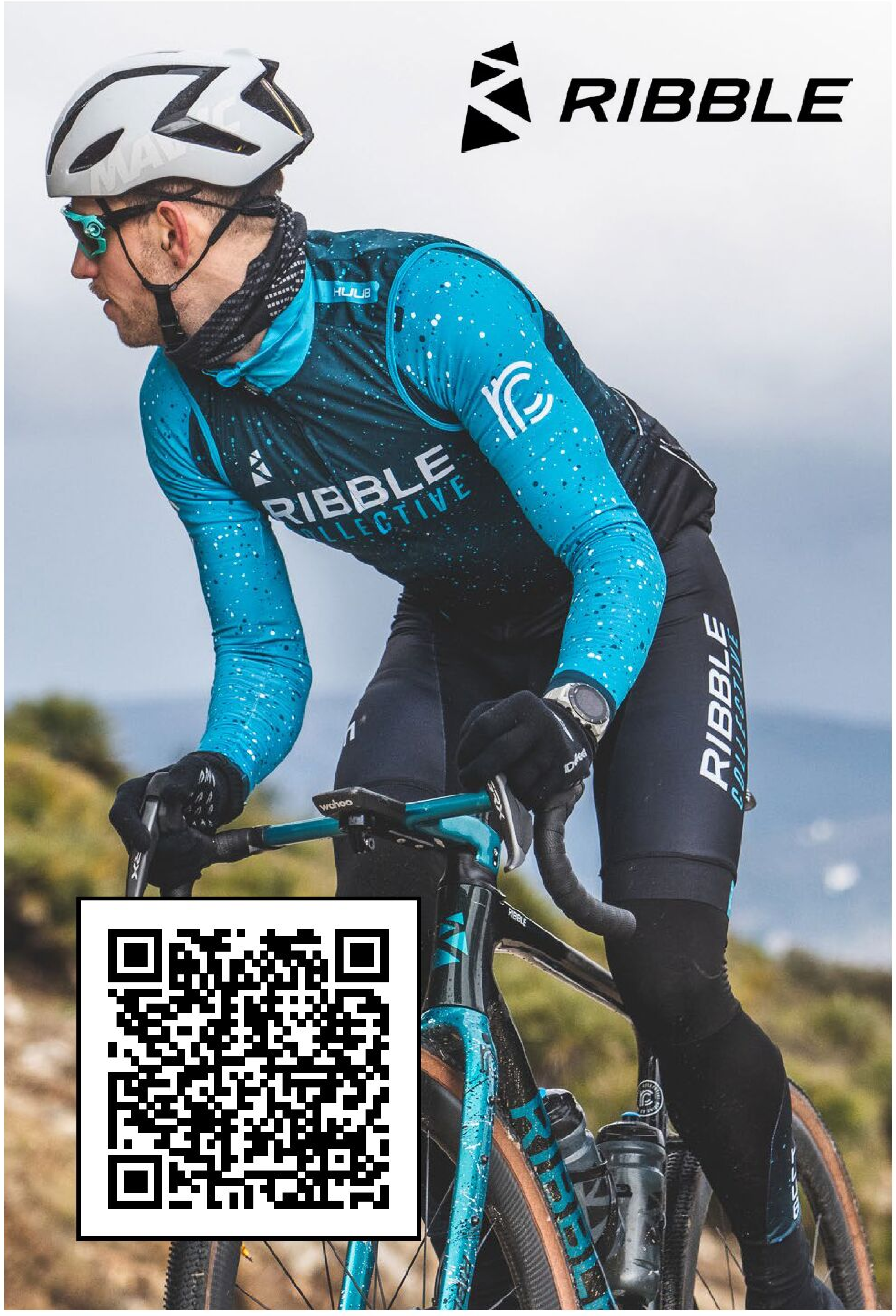
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NEW FOREST

I'm sitting outside the pub on the roadside contentedly biting into a brie and ale chutney sandwich, when a horse saunters past. Then two more. Then a cow. The Londoners next to me stop playing with the fart apps on their phones and rear up in surprise.

I'm in the New Forest for the Wiggle New Forest sportive on Sunday, but this is a good excuse to spend the whole weekend exploring the quiet, smooth roads of the National Park on my trusty steed. I'm keen to discover this land of grazing ponies and find out how well bikes and horses mix – who will win in the battle of the riders?

Animals rule the road here. Grazing horses are everywhere, and it's they – not drivers, cyclists or pedestrians, who have right of way and take priority above all else. This seems fair to me, after all they've been here since the Ice Age, whereas in the grand scheme of things the rest of us are all just visitors.

The pub serving the aforementioned brie sandwich is the East End Arms in the village of East Boldre. Today horses are shading themselves in the wooden shelter of the bus stop opposite the post office, and getting here involves weaving in and out of cattle feeding their calves in the middle of the road.

There's time for some casual riding today before the sportive tomorrow – from experience, it will whizz by in a flash with no time to soak up the surroundings. We'll all have our heads down, focusing on getting to the next flapjack, and shielding our eyes from the brightly coloured lycra encasing nearby sweaty bodies.

I've come a day early to immerse myself in the New Forest properly – to spend some time sleeping outside in nature, and quietly pootling around the tranquil lanes, seeking out spots to remember. The sun is shining, and I have parked up in Ivy Wood car park near Brockenhurst, where a sign politely asks visitors to refrain from picking more than 1.5kg of mushrooms. I don't think my pockets would fit that many mushrooms in anyway so I decide to leave the spores to do their thing and get on the road.

My most recent memory of the New Forest was on an overnight ride from Guildford to Christchurch on the summer solstice. The scenery couldn't have looked more different then, emerging into the misty park at sunrise, the forest provided an eerie and surreal other-worldy morning awakening. This time the sun fills the sky with light and my back with warmth.

I smear on suncream and fill my tyres with air in the shady seclusion of the car park. Heading out and turning right onto the main road, all seems surprisingly quiet. There's a bit of an incline to start but the forest is peaceful and welcoming and before long the terrain flattens out. Signs for off-road trails are dotted along the way, and the occasional bike crosses in the distance ahead of me.

It's not long before the road opens up onto the gorse-scattered heathland that my mind associates most with the New Forest, and which confused me greatly on my first visit. Why is a vast area of shrubbery called the New Forest? I've since discovered there are more trees than I initially thought. The sunshine makes this scenery magical and wonderful, very different from the misty morning moonscape it was the last time I saw it. Birdsong is in full flow, and the hills of the South Downs are visible on the blurred horizon.

There are blackberries in abundance here, and I wish I'd brought a container to put some in to take home and make a crumble or a cake – perhaps a New Forest Gateau. I continue along to Hatchett Pond, which is empty and just waking up despite it being nearly midday. Later in the afternoon, the area is crowded with cars, families with dogs wander around, and an ice cream van tempts passers-by to 99s. I succumb.

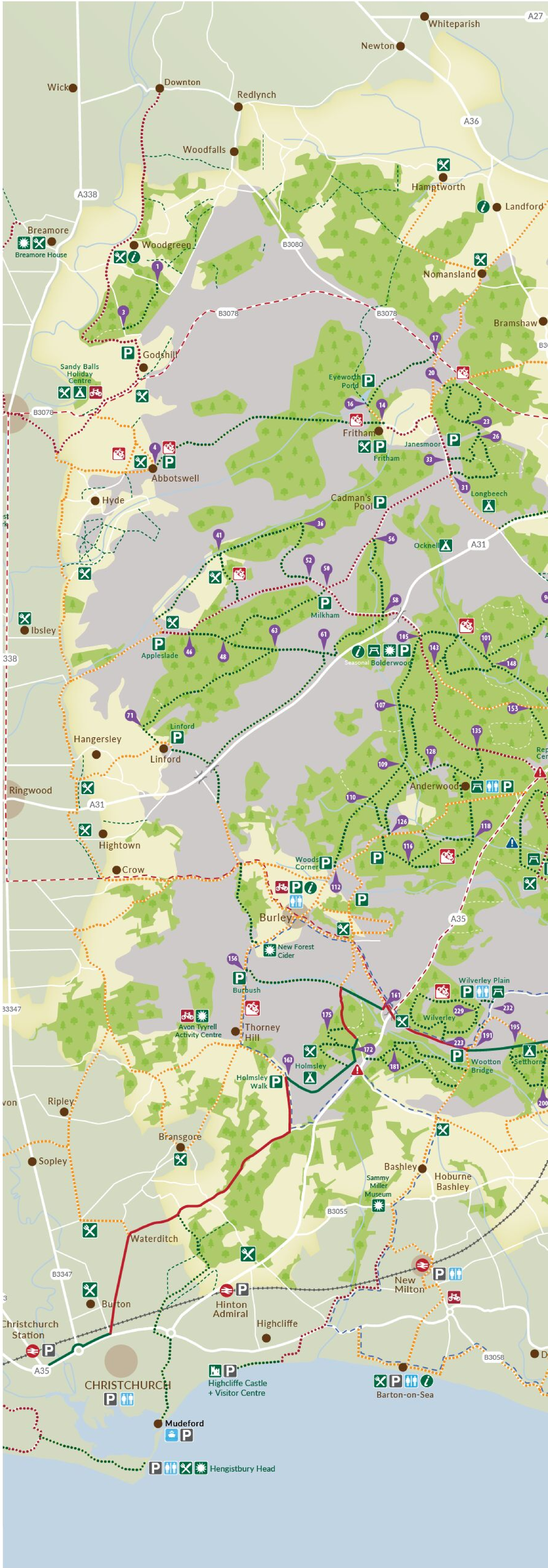
To my surprise, there are signs around the area for a cycling event tomorrow – my understanding was that the sportive route was further to the west and north. Human Race vans are putting up the signs and it transpires that there is another event too tomorrow in the forest – the Macmillan Cycletta, part of a women-only series of rides which is going from strength to strength. Something tells me many of these 'cycling event' signs stay put all through the summer, with organised rides happening frequently in this perfect cycling terrain.

I want to try out a route from Matt Carroll's 'Escape Routes' book – a gift given to me by my dad a couple of years ago which I have enjoyed perusing but never managed to actually escape with. This particular local route starts at the East End Arms – which is apparently owned by Dire Straights' bassist John Illsley. The tables at the front start off promisingly full of cyclists – a group of mountain bikers and a couple on what look like folding electric bikes. Sadly they've all gone by the time I come back out after ordering food – although the horses continue to pass nonchalantly.

In the heart of Escape Routes territory now, I spread out my OS Explorer map on the table alongside the book, happily planning my own version of Matt Carroll's route with a slight detour to Beaulieu, and factoring in a short cut back to Ivy Hill car park. The feeling of sunshine on my back is reassuring and I set off, following the route in the book, although the book didn't mention squeezing yourself through a small gap between horses at the first junction. True to the book though, there is a lovely tithe barn on the left along this road, and just before this I am stopped in my tracks by the view of a large ship on the River Beaulieu off to the right. Having forgotten that we were so close to the sea, this came as a surprise and I was pleased to see a sign educating me about the history of this ship-building and launch area for warships.

Bucklers Hard is a bit further along with beautiful views, a historical village and museum providing more information about this maritime history, with river trips available. There's a stone seat perfect for resting cycling legs just outside the village, and I indulge for a few moments then continue on, ignoring Matt Carroll's left turn (I have already explored East Boldre) and opting instead to go to Beaulieu. Retrospectively this decision was a bad one – after admiring the outside of the National Motor Museum and sitting by a pond with donkeys, I discover the main road out of Beaulieu is the busiest yet, and there's a hill too. But it's not long before the roads get quieter again, and there's that pungent sweet smell of horses and gassy vintage camper vans passing me by as the lane snakes back through shrubs, forest and dappled sunshine clearings to Ivy Wood.

My next mission is to find a suitable spot to camp wild. I'm aiming for a year of 'microadventures', inspired by Alastair Humphries, whose book of the same name is another that sits alongside Matt Carroll's on my favourite shelf. Bivvying under the stars should still be fairly comfortable at this time of year, and my friend Tom, who is arriving at Brockenhurst tonight, is up for adventure. The key is to identify a spot whilst it's still light, so you know roughly what you're going to wake up to. Back at the car park, it transpires that the woods have beautiful clearings just out of view of the main road with a river running through the bottom, perfect for a morning wild swim/paddle.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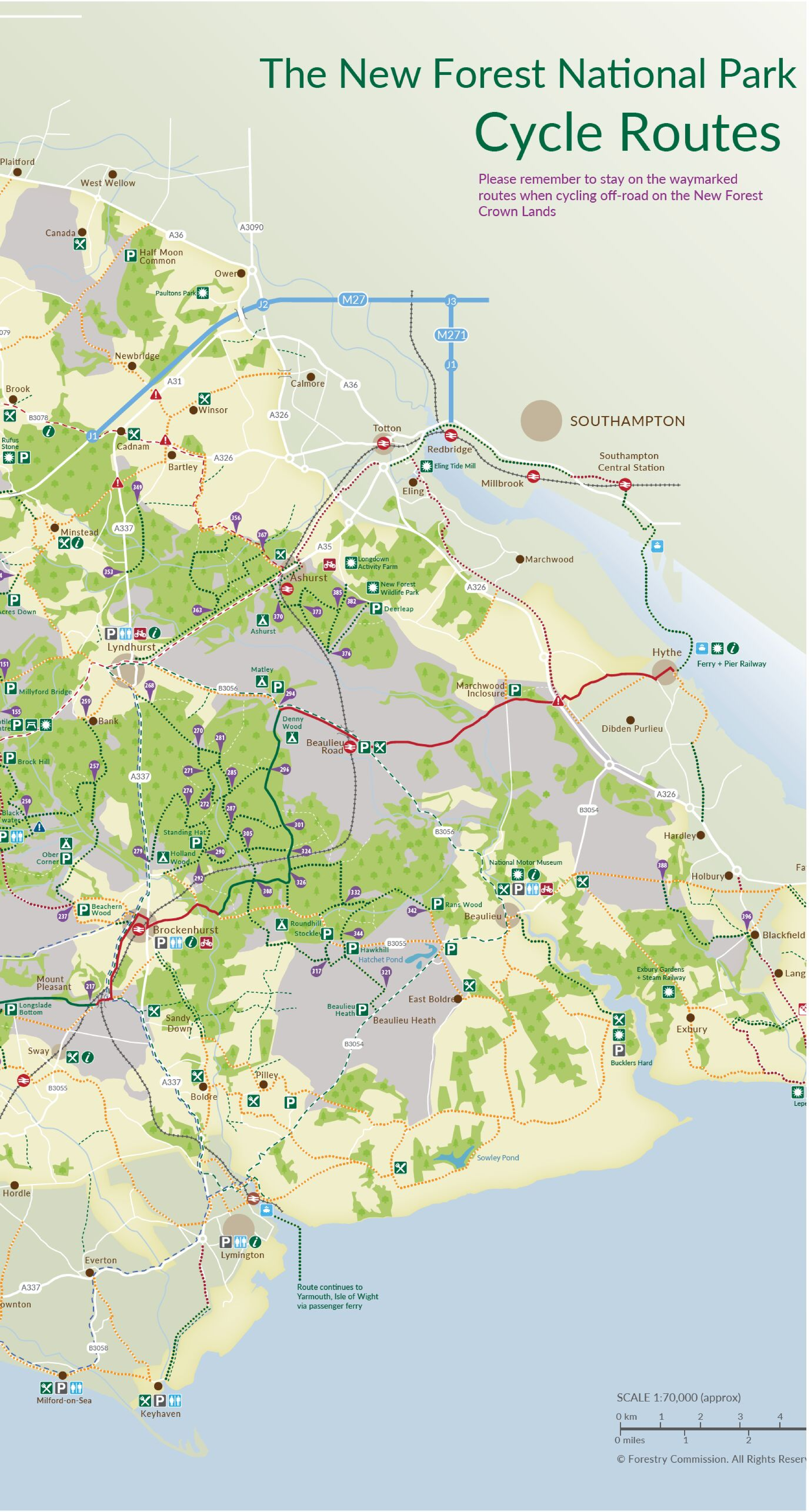
Mudeford
Hengistbury Head


The New Forest National Park
Cycle Routes
Please remember to stay on the waymarked routes when cycling off-road on the New Forest Crown Lands
SOUTHAMPTON
Southampton Central Station
Plaitford
West Wellow
Canada
Half Moon Common
Ower
Paultons Park
M27
J2
J3
M271
J1
Newbridge
Brook
Calmore
Winsor
Cadnam
Bartley
Totton
Redbridge
Eling Tide Mill
Eling
Millbrook
Minstead
Longdown Activity Farm
New Forest Wildlife Park
Deerleap
Ashurst
Marchwood
Lyndhurst
Matley
Millyford Bridge
Bank
Denny Wood
Beaulieu Road
Marchwood Inclosure
Hythe
Ferry + Pier Railway
Dibden Purlieu
Brock Hill
Standing Hat
Holland Wood
Ober Corner
Hardley
Holbury
National Motor Museum
Beaulieu
Rans Wood
Blackfield
Beachern Wood
Brockenhurst
Roundhill
Stockley
Hawkhill
Hatchet Pond
Exbury Gardens + Steam Railway
Mount Pleasant
Longslade Bottom
East Boldre
Beaulieu Heath
Exbury
Sandy Down
Sway
Pilley
Boldre
Bucklers Hard
Sowley Pond
Hordle
Lymington
Everton
Route continues to Yarmouth, Isle of Wight via passenger ferry
Milford-on-Sea
Keyhaven
SCALE 1:70,000 (approx)
0 km 1 2 3 4
0 miles 1 2
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I meet Tom off the train, and we go to the pub to eat hot food and soak up warmth for the night under the stars ahead. We talk about bikes, horses and the plan and I describe the spot I've identified. I start to scare myself as we discuss things that might happen. What if a car pulls into the car park? What if we get trampled by angry horses, shouted at by park rangers. What if it all goes Blair Witch project? He offers me his warm socks and I calm down.

Luckily the clearing still feels good in the dark. Tom's tent goes up, my bivvy bag goes down next to it. Cosy in three layers of clothes, I fall asleep looking at the stars, framed by fronds of high leaves. The trees are oak and this means acorns fall off occasionally landing on me. Owls screech, creatures scurry, and horses bray. One comes so close I can hear it's breath as it explores the clearing around us. My mind, tense in the dark, relaxes as the morning dawns, and by the time I have the stove on making a cup of tea I'm the happiest person alive. And I'm about to embark on a 42 mile sportive – life could not be better.

After a breakfast of porridge, fruit and nuts, we're sleepily in the car on the way to Matcham's Leisure Park, where the Wiggle New Forest Sportive begins – we're doing the 'short' route. Time is a bit tight, but there is just enough time to register, change from camping clothes to cycling attire (in my case behind a pile of rubble in the car park), stick numbers on our bikes, load pockets with bananas, cereal bars and sweets and get to the start line before the 9.45am cut-off.

Everywhere is bright lycra, vibrant smiles and shiny energy bars and drinks, a shock to the eyes after a night of darkness and trees. Excited people with energy exuding from their pores mill around, filled with anticipation of the ride ahead and sharing it with others.

The drive to the venue had taken in the final stretch we'd be cycling, so we'd seen that the route had good signage and was well-planned and manned. Slightly sleepy-looking marshals were positioned before any tricky junctions and managed to summon up enough energy to wave flags at vehicles and warn riders loudly of the impending dangers. Some even looked like they were still enjoying themselves. The first hour or so

was beautifully flat, easing the legs into the ride nicely. The scenery was different than yesterdays, if equally idyllic. We zoomed down lovely, quiet lanes with lots of hedgerows, skirting around and going through villages such as Kingston and Ringwood, and Fordingbridge, where riders were instructed to thin out to single file. Out of the corner of my squinting eye (I had not expected to need sunglasses at this time of year) I spotted signs along the way for such tempting tourist attractions as a heavy horse museum and an owl sanctuary. I made a mental note to visit these in some future life.

The feed station appeared much faster than expected, with water, flapjacks, banana, jelly beans and a free PowerBar energy bar to take for later. The additional and less traditional snack available was pistachios - not just any pistachios but American Pistachios, the official snack of Mark Cavendish. I am assuming this must mean the official bar snack of Mark Cavendish. Don't get me wrong, I have practical experience of on-bike food assembly whilst touring (camembert baguettes mainly) but you really don't want to be shelling pistachio nuts whilst riding a sportive. Wisely, most people seemed to leave them until the end which resulted in finishing the sportive and stepping onto a pistachio shell carpet – a fun and crunchy alternative to the red carpet, the sound of cleats on shells reverberating around the finish area.

When not worn on nutshell carpets, cleated bike shoes often sound to me like ponies approaching, which cleverly brings me back to my original equine observations. In the middle of the dilapidated go-karting track that marks the sportive start/finish is an untethered grazing pony. Whether or not she notices the thousands of man-made steeds around her is unclear – but without doubt she knows that the men and women gripping onto them have just ridden their socks off and enjoyed whizzing through land she and her ancestors have munched on for generations.

It seems that horses and bikes mix together perfectly well in the New Forest, sharing not only the lanes and junctions but a quiet and mutual respect for the serene surroundings, and an understanding of what it means to experience it with all your senses, with your own freedom of movement, in your own time. I'm going to miss the New Forest ponies wandering about when I head back to my native Surrey, where horses are securely encased in stables and privately owned pastures.

St. John's Primary School
North
Broad
bots Mill Garden
Mill Ln
The King's School
King St
Palace St
Canterbury Cathedral
Burgate

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COROS PACE PRO GPS SPORT WATCH

A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW FOR CYCLISTS

COROS
14
26
14/12
SAT
95 %
STEP
2600

The first thing that strikes you about the PACE Pro is its vibrant 1.2-inch color LCD display. The screen is bright and clear, making it easy to read data even in direct sunlight – a crucial factor for cyclists. The watch face is customizable, allowing you to prioritize the metrics most relevant to your rides. The five-button design is intuitive and easy to navigate, even with gloves on.

The watch is lightweight and comfortable to wear, which is essential for long rides. It doesn't feel bulky or intrusive, and the silicone band is soft and breathable, preventing excessive sweating and discomfort. The overall design is sleek and understated, making it suitable for both sporty and casual wear.

Accurate GPS tracking is paramount for any cycling watch, and the PACE Pro delivers on this front. It quickly acquires a GPS signal and maintains a strong connection throughout your ride, providing reliable data on distance, speed, and pace. The watch also supports GLONASS and BeiDou satellite systems, further enhancing accuracy in challenging environments.

The PACE Pro offers basic navigation features, allowing you to follow pre-loaded routes and track your progress. While it doesn't offer turn-by-turn navigation with street names, it provides clear visual cues and alerts to keep you on track.
This is sufficient for most cyclists who primarily ride on familiar routes or use a separate device for detailed navigation.

The PACE Pro offers a range of features tailored to cyclists, including:

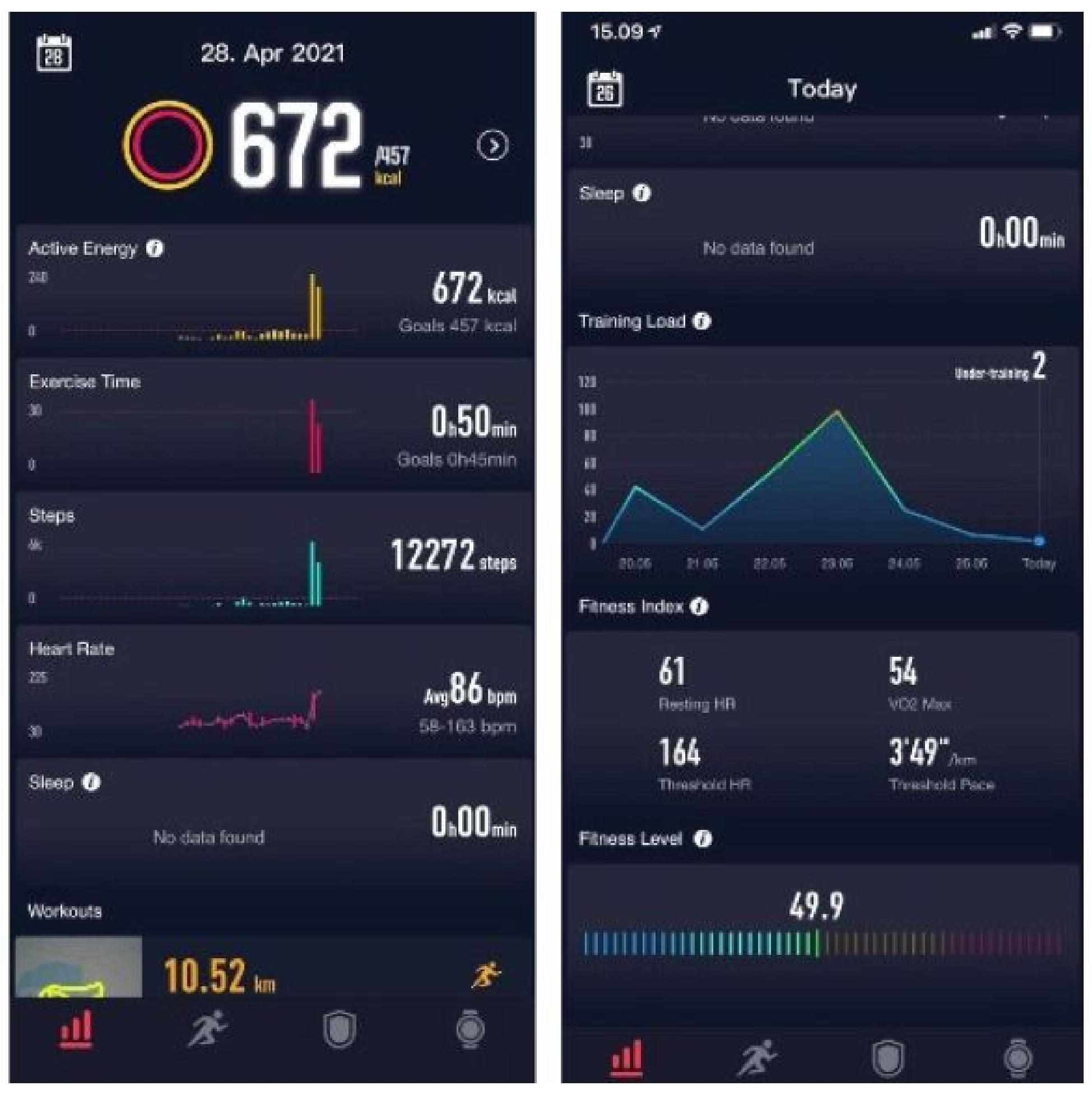
Real-time data: The watch displays essential cycling metrics such as speed, distance, time, heart rate, cadence, and power (when paired with a compatible sensor).

Customizable data screens: You can configure the data screens to display the metrics that are most important to you, ensuring that you have all the information you need at a glance.

Interval training: The watch allows you to set up structured interval workouts, which can be invaluable for improving your cycling performance.

Watch Face
ScoreBoard
SEED
Gear Box 2
Doodle
Explore 1
Digito
24h on the track
THE CLIMBERS
Panzer
NEON SIGN
Dashboard 2
Illustrator 2
ABSOLUTE BLACK
METER
WOOLENS
FEAST
ITALICS
SPACE

COROS
100%
08
8043
650
36
TUE 29
18:55


28. Apr 2021
672
Active Energy
672 kcal
Exercise Time
0h50min
Steps
12272 steps
Heart Rate
Avg 86 bpm
Sleep
No data found
0h00min
Workouts
10.52 km
Today
Sleep
No data found
0h00min
Training Load
Fitness Index
61
Resting HR
54
VO2 Max
164
Threshold HR
3'49"/km
Threshold Pace
Fitness Level
49.9

Auto-pause: This feature automatically pauses your ride recording when you stop, such as at traffic lights, ensuring accurate data capture.

Compatibility with external sensors: The PACE Pro supports Bluetooth connectivity, allowing you to pair it with external heart rate monitors, cadence sensors, and power meters for more comprehensive data.

Battery life is a crucial consideration for any GPS watch, especially for cyclists who embark on long rides or multi-day tours. The PACE Pro boasts impressive battery performance, offering up to 30 hours of GPS use. In real-world testing, I found that the watch easily lasted for several long rides on a single charge. This is a significant advantage over many other GPS watches on the market, which often require daily charging.

The COROS app is a user-friendly platform that allows you to sync your watch data, analyze your workouts, and track your progress. The app provides detailed insights into your cycling activities, including metrics such as speed, distance, elevation, heart rate, and cadence. You can also use the app to create custom workouts, plan routes, and share your activities with others.

The COROS PACE Pro offers excellent value for money. It provides a comprehensive set of features, accurate tracking, and long battery life at a competitive price point. Compared to other high-end GPS watches on the market, the PACE Pro offers a similar level of performance for a significantly lower cost.

The COROS PACE Pro GPS Sport Watch is a fantastic option for cyclists who are looking for a reliable, feature-rich, and affordable device. It offers accurate tracking, a comfortable fit, long battery life, and a range of cycling-specific features. While it may not have all the bells and whistles of some high-end watches, it provides everything that most cyclists need to track their rides, monitor their performance, and achieve their goals.

The COROS PACE Pro is a highly capable cycling watch that offers excellent value for money. It is a great choice for cyclists of all levels who are looking for a reliable and feature-rich device to track their rides and improve their performance.

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ROTOR
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RIBBLE

Ribble Rebellion

bike-mag.com/ribble

STAFFORDSHIRE CYCLING

NO ENTRY
NO ENTRY

From the moment we step out of Stoke on Trent railway station there are constant reminders that this is the home of china

Wheeling our bikes out of the station we are greeted by an imposing bronze statue of dapper 18th century ceramicist Josiah Wedgwood, who helped to make Stoke an industrial centre for pottery.

The elegant hotel and warm brick buildings in the Jacobean-style square that first greet railway passengers were constructed to service a rapidly expanding potteries industry. I'm here to try out the China Cycle Trail developed by Sustrans, which follows some of this rich history, and look for inspiration for a Valentine's Day present from a vibrant array of talented ceramicists still turning and decorating pots in workshops and factories along the eight-mile route.

A cycle hub at the station is a reassuring sign that this is also a place that is accustomed to people on bikes. Stoke is home to several well-known bicycle businesses including Swinnerton, Brian Rourke, George Longstaff and Pro-Vision, and there are several cycle routes in and around the city.

I've met up with Sustrans' Schools officer Stephen Dyster, who works to get more children cycling in Stoke and leads rides occasional bike rides along the China Cycle Trail. We pedal off down the main road in the direction of Hanley [route 555], through the wrought iron gates of peaceful Hanley park. Geese and ducks glide across the lake and young couples stroll leisurely through a tree-lined walk. Within minutes we turn on to the Caldon canal and cruise steadily along, greeting fellow bike riders and walkers along the way.

The circular trail is designed to be an easy route, which is mainly traffic-free, so it's great for a family day out or for reluctant riders. There are lots of opportunities for tea and cake, shopping and museums.

The canals round here are inextricably linked with the history of the potteries. Josiah Wedgwood cut the first sod of the Trent and Mersey Canal in 1777 at Middleport, and you don't have to travel far along the water course before you come across the first chance for a history lesson. The Etruria Industrial Museum is at the junction of the Trent and Mersey and the Caldon canals, and is the only steam driven potters' mill in the world. The Museum has exhibits relating to industrial heritage, with occasional steam-up days. Etruria was once a thriving industrial centre, where Wedgwood set up his factory village, named after the artistic Italian district of Etruria. The museum is only open for events or special appointments, so we don't stop this time, and carry on our ride along the canal.

It's not long before the first bottle oven looms into sight. The distinctive beehive shape of the industrial kilns which pepper this landscape signals our arrival into Burslem, known as

the heart of the potteries. Wedgwood also set up his first pottery here to manufacture his now internationally famous Jasperware and other styles, before moving to Etruria and Barlaston.

We wheel our bikes over the canal bridge to Middleport Pottery, the home of Burleigh, which is still produced on site. The factory almost closed down in 2011, but thanks to a £9million grant from the Princes Regeneration Trust, continues to produce ceramics and has become a vibrant visitor attraction too. There are regular tours of the factory floor, where you can watch pots being crafted in the same skilled 19th century methods that were used when the potteries were in their heyday, step inside the bottle oven where thousands of pots were fired, or relax in a stylish café in the old packing house, which overlooks the canal.

It's a warren of intriguing Dickensian-style buildings and cobbled streets, where every window is a glimpse into part of the production process: neat stacks of pot moulds, the broad-bottom saggars which were used to protect pots as they were fired, or rows of gleaming tea sets and plates. Individual craftspeople also have workshops in the complex and there are regular activities and events.

We could have wandered round Middleport for a long time, and the sunny terrace of the café was particularly appealing, but we had a tight schedule to visit other potteries, so it was back on the bikes and the familiar terrain of the canal. We make a slight detour to Westport Lake, a lovely picnic spot with a visitor centre. As the wildfowl chatter to each other on the water it's difficult to imagine that this was once a dump for waste pottery and an eyesore.

Back on the main route Stephen leads us away from the canal at the top of our circular route. We cross over to an old railway line which once shunted high grade limestone to the potteries. The path is now part of national cycle route 5, and travels back through Burslem.

As we coast along the pleasant

tree-lined path we pass more bottle ovens, signalling past factories, Stephen gives me an idea of the scale of the potteries: "There were once thousands of these ovens in Stoke on Trent, which produced a thick yellow smoke, so the place was known as Smoke on Trent."

There is a café and information point for Royal Stafford just before Burslem Park and nearby Barewall Gallery is well worth a stop to browse the collection of contemporary art, ceramics and glass, with some unusual craft gift opportunities.

The China Trail continues on to Central Forest Park, the landscaped site of the former Hanley Deep Pit, via the Moorcroft Heritage Visitor Centre. It's possible to tour the old Moorcroft factory and get close to original, collectable pieces of Moorcroft pottery, renowned throughout the world for their vibrant glazes and designs. The bottle oven is currently being restored, and there is also a gift shop and cafe.

Next the trail takes us back on the road into Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent's city centre, for the final leg of the journey. The nearby Dudson Museum is also a working pottery dating back 200 years, with tours, including another chance to step inside a bottle oven (grade II listed), as well as a cafe and shop.

The Potteries Museum and Art gallery boasts one of the world's finest collections of Staffordshire ceramics, as well as decorative arts, natural history, and of course a cafe for hungry cyclists. There's even a secret garden. Renowned local ceramic artist Anita Harris also has an outlet in the intu Potteries Shopping Centre for more gift opportunities.

We make a slight detour off the route to the Emma Bridgewater factory, housed on another characterful old Victorian site on the banks of the Caldon Canal. The company's instantly-recognisable nature-inspired designs are popular around the world, and the shop and cafe have a constant stream of pottery fans. It seems only right to stop for tea and a sandwich. I sit in a sunny

courtyard and watch the factory workers applying colourful glazes with delicate brush strokes in the building opposite.

The old Spode factory site, where Josiah Spode first built up his empire, fittingly marks both the end and the beginning of the circular China Trail, in Stoke town centre. The factory closed a few years ago but the vast factory floor has been beautifully restored into the China Hall, sometimes used for exhibitions and events. From 26 September to 8 November 2018 it hosted the British Ceramics Biennial, showcasing over 30 new and established artists to challenge traditional perceptions of pottery. There's a visitor centre at Spode and the site has recently been awarded £700,000 to transform empty factory buildings into artists' studios.

As I leave the exhibition hall I notice a quote on the wall from Josiah Wedgwood, which seems like a fitting epitaph to the hard work over centuries of the skilled artisans and engineers represented along today's China Cycle Trail: "Beautiful forms and compositions are not made by chance."

Ceramic cyclists

The distinctive beehive shapes of Stoke's bottle ovens form the backdrop for a vibrant painted scene of a racing cyclist on unique pieces created by local ceramicist Anita Harris. She merged the history of the potteries with cycling to commemorate the Tour of Britain on two occasions the tour passed through the city. "I wanted people to instantly recognise it as Stoke, so I put bottle ovens on the cycle route," she explains. In 2013 the local councillor presented her hand-painted vase to Sir Bradley Wiggins, and he went on to become the leader of the race. "It's great to think that Sir Bradley has got one of my pieces in his living room," she smiles.

Anita was head designer at Poole Pottery for 10 years and now has her own workshop four miles outside Stoke. She specialises in a more complex technique known as 'reactive glazes', a type of chemistry

experiment, where the artist has little idea how the colours of the product will turn out in the end. Each piece is hand painted and depending on the complexity can take over a week to complete, so the workshop only produces just a few hundred items a year. "The glazes we use bear no resemblance to the colours of the finished pieces, so we never know what we're going to get. We trickle the glazes, layer them up or etch. We can outline with gold, create special colours and depths and often use lustres. Sometimes we fire a piece four or five times before we finish it."

Anita says there are often items in the shop which have a cycling theme and the company can personalise anything for a special event or anniversary. Stoke has typically been a supporter of cycling. "There's always a good turn-out in Stoke to watch the cycling and there are a lot of cyclists in the city. My son cycles a lot and cycles along the China Trail. It's a way of seeing parts of the city that you don't normally get to see and keep fit. "

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Granite
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COAST2COAST

Alexis and friends make a five-day, 171.3 mile 'bike-packing' adventure out of Sustrans' excellent C2C trail from Whitehaven to Tynemouth with plenty of diversions, luxury items, rain and whimsy en-route.

DAY 1
Whitehaven-Thornthwaite

5a.m. and London was still resolutely snoozing and about as placid and peaceful as it gets. Moderate to heavy whisky consumption the night before with rider Bill Kenny made for a fuzzy head compounded by a lack of sleep from giddy excitement about our impending 'micro-adventure'. I also had just about recovered from shellfish poisoning (never force open a closed mussel!) so was not really in A1 physical shape but I knew that if managed correctly the next five days of exercise, fresh air and good food, it would restore body and soul.

On our heavily laden bicycles (I chose my solid friend Thorn Sherpa, Bill on his shiny Dawes Galaxy) we snaked through near empty Hackney streets to rendezvous point Euston station where we met Jon Fieldhouse (riding a fine glitter-green build of his own touring bike brand 'LPY'), Matt Wright (also on an LPY rig albeit with fatter, off road tyres) and David Sherrington (aboard his custom Condor tourer also known as 'Luscious Lugs'). Our racks strained under the weight of panniers stuffed with cooking gear, clothes, tinned fish, tents, tools, cameras, a drone (yes that's right a drone) and a coconut. As we board the 06.45 Virgin Pendolino Euston-Carlisle the guard jokes "Are you sure you have enough stuff?" and the answer as always is no.

Four pendulous hours later and we are in Carlisle, eat a massive fry up (Dave has a pint) and we transfer to a Northern Rail service to our official ride start point Whitehaven.

Another rider obliges and takes the mandatory photo of riders and bikes next to the C2C sign with back wheels dipped in the Irish Sea. Its 2pm, hot, sunny with a tasty tailwind and the beautiful former railway path gradually rises urging us eastwards into the stunning Lake District. We pass through tiny sheep farming hamlets, signs warning of red squirrels and weave around the shores of small pine-forest-shrouded, sparkly lakes and the inclines increase to up to 20% at times. 'Keep hydrated' I tell myself as I'm prone to overheating and end up splashing around in a mountain stream like an animal to cool off.

Weather report from the girlfriend confirms that the monsoon like rains are moving north so we call ahead to book pitches on Lanefoot Farm campsite in Thorntwaite. The fast dry fire roads of Whinlatter Forest are the perfect end to our first 25 miles of riding. We pitch up at the excellent site, freshen-up, ride to a local pub where the local ale goes down oh so well.

Day 2
Thornthwaite-Patterdale

Woken early by rain pattering on my Vaude tent's roof, I climb out into mud that wasn't there the night before and I'm surrounded by friendly sheep who have escaped from a nearby field. I feel a long way from my Medway home with misty rain clouds hugging the steep hillsides. I sense the familiar dull ache of muscle sets re-awoken, not used since the Dunwich Dynamo a couple of months earlier. I could moan about the assault of midges, the lumpy ground, the

under-geared state of my bike's drivetrain and the atrocious weather, but an over-riding sense of purpose and 'joie de vivre' takes over particularly when presented with a tasty tent-cooked bacon buttie...thanks David you ledge.

So a COBRA style meeting is called and we decide to avoid pitching sodden tents in a wet campsite, instead booking a room in YHA Patterdale. This slight detour off the C2C route would give us the chance to ride along the banks of Ullswater Lake and have a place to dry our gear and sleep in warm dry beds. Luxury dogs!

We set out. A meagre 20 miles lay ahead but 20 million raindrops stood between us and a hot shower. I fully appreciate now why the Lake District has lakes.

After only eight miles a very welcome break is had in the 'Saddleback Café' in Keswick where they obviously are used to serving great food and drink to C2C riders and walkers. We eat cake, get caffeinated whilst giggling at classic satirical cycling book 'The Rules' and gear fan David gets waterproof socks from the bike shop next door.

The run out of Keswick is one of the finest sections of bike friendly infrastructure I have experienced. Again Sustrans have done a great job of recycling a disused railway line into an efficient multi-user path. Clear signage, bridges and shelters are provided en route. We pass a derelict station and cross a bridge over an angry, swollen River Greta and are treated to Jurrasic Park style vistas minus the dinos. So often

we forget we are in the UK. My main regret on leaving Keswick is that we didn't factor in time to visit the Cumberland Pencil Museum having been a heavy user of pencils from the age of four; next time I promise myself with my own four-year-old.

Hands start to wrinkle from absorbing rain and a pub appears with a roaring open fire: it would be daft not to stop for refreshment and warmth. The Troutbeck Inn is a sanctuary placed an hour before the final push up then fast downhill to Patterdale on the southern bank of svelte Ullswater. I only nearly fell in the lake once when trying out a lakeside off-road short cut.

Day 3
Patterdale-Nenthead

We awoke refreshed with sunlight blasting into our comfy YHA room. Bill yoga-waved the sungods on the balcony, Jon and Matt dried things and Dave 'fry-up major' Sherrington and I donned our tasteful lycras and fixed breakfast. We needed to fuel up and get real. Today was to be a big-riding day (up to 35 miles…heroes!).

David and I, I guess because of the lycra, took the lead north along the lake's bank towards Penrith. A wee bit jealous of David's speedy Condor but I kept pace.

After an hour on quiet rural roads a bustling metropolis such as Penrith can be hazardous. Dumb bypasses and overcrowded

OPEN
COME
IN

junctions conspired to cause our first and only collision; me slamming into Bills panniers. No damage, just buddies intertwined on a busy roundabout for about 25 seconds and happy I brought my skid-lid along.

A very steep climb out of Penrith sees us leave the stunning Lake District, I'm sad to see it go and will return for more cycling with the family I promise myself. David nearly leaves us!

Although C2C way-markers and signs are very clear, descents can be fast and this was the first of a few occasions when Luscious Lugs has careened off with our pal in completely the wrong direction.

But soon we were back on track and eating one of our epic luncheons on a beauty of a village green at Langwathby. I enjoy eating almost as much as I enjoy cycling. We demolish avocado, chocolate, sausage rolls, crisps, dates, coffee, sardines, fruit and cake.

With greed-fed grunts we start climbing the foothills of the Pennines. Along the way I spot the words 'Not on my Watch!' daubed in red (blood?!) on the tarmac shortly followed by a series of voles or moles strung up in a sacrificial manner along a barbed wire fence (please contact CW if you know what this is about!) Then the sheer face of Hartside presents itself. The 756m elevation felt like three Ditchling Beacons on top of each other, for those of you familiar with the London to Brighton ride. At one point a car pulls over in-front of me and a man climbs out, gestures to me and asks "Are you ok mate??...we are concerned" "A-OK thanks" I reply "I always wobble at altitude!" I then snuck up a short but steep off-road short-cut (the C2C has plenty of such options) beating my 700c wheel-equipped friends to the summit. 'You laugh at my small wheels and bar-ends boys but who's laughing now?' I think to myself! A great café sits at the top where you can admire the view and the expensive motorcycles parked up. The tap water is brown on account of the moorland peat but

BIKE

it's fine the staff tell us and Jon's luxury 'Ricqles' peppermint oil drops mask any brown taste.

Then we saddle up and it feels like jumping out of a plane as we descend all the way down the western side hitting 40mph. Then along to the highest market settlement in England, Alston, and up again through picturesque, cobbled streets decorated with yellow bikes anticipating the arrival of The Tour of Britain. Finally towards Haggs' Bank Camping and Bunkhouse near Nenthead. We then get eaten by midges, have a pasta cook up using stream water, watch a perfect sunset, see dancing revellers dressed as hot-dogs and strawberries party below, get a little drunk ourselves, go for a pointless walk (but it is so good to walk off riding legs), watch the millions of stars come out and count satellites zooming past and go to bed cold but contented.

Day 4
Nenthead-Consett

As you can tell, we are 'making a meal' out of the C2C. Most make it in three days, a few do it in one and some club riders we meet claim one of their members did C2C-C2C in under 24 hours! Today would be the hardest day… at least for me.

Hills, hills and more lovely hills. And rusty orange Northumberland moors and so much epic silence, not even a breeze, only broken by occasional superbikes roaring past. It feels really isolated; snowmarkers and the road the only signs of civilization. We launch Jon's drone to get footage and a better view…it was worth the extra weight!

We have a great coffee-stop in Allenheads and check out the community-owned lead-mining Heritage Centre and for the next five or so miles we ride through a ghostly steep-sided valley peppered with mine-relics, broken bridges; the echoes of abandoned industry.

We stick to the on-road option to lunch stop Stanhope, after passing a ghoulish woman dressed in Victorian garb pushing an ancient pram in the

middle of nowhere. I stuff myself, foolishly with Co. Durham's tasty but heavy chippy chips with optional 'batter bits' and then smash out a steep, long climb to the top of Stanhope Common. From Parkhead Station we can just about make out the finish-line of the North Sea. A long descent on a well-surfaced, disused railway track drops us down 'cruise control style' to Consett where we camp for the night; a good caravan site making an exception for a polite group of C2Cers with tents. After civilised coconut, rum and Lilt drinking we sleep so well.

Day 5
Consett-Tynemouth

We wake to bright sunshine and no animals fried for our breakfast this morning; all yogurt, muesli and fruit. Our final leg was not hard or as scenic as the rest of the trip. Mostly downhill to Newcastle, we practically coast to the coast (see what I did there!) Matt nearly crushes two dozy dogs under his knobbly tyres and much of the route along the Tyne's banks is busy and shared use, so we drop our pace further.

I love a good 'cycle-café', ever since my many years of spanner service at London's pioneering 'Look Mum No Hands!' So a visit to Newcastle's 'The Cycle Hub' is a perfect last stop for good coffee, tyre pumping, info, maps and mixing it with other bikeniks.

The final section to Tynemouth is a touch lumpy and less photogenic but South Shields is a pretty bustling fishing harbour. We round the corner of the headland and we reach the Tynemouth finish! Tide is well out so no front wheel dipping unfortunately.

I neck a disgusting caffeine shot energy drink (first of the trip; adrenaline and EPO sustaining me most other days) and we turn tail; due to Metro trains no non-folding bike policy it's back to Newcastle for us! A beer at the station and champagne on the train. We are glowing, fit(ter) and definitely merrier than five days ago. We swear to plan another bike adventure soon; my body and soul craves it and I implore you try the C2C too…it is mega!

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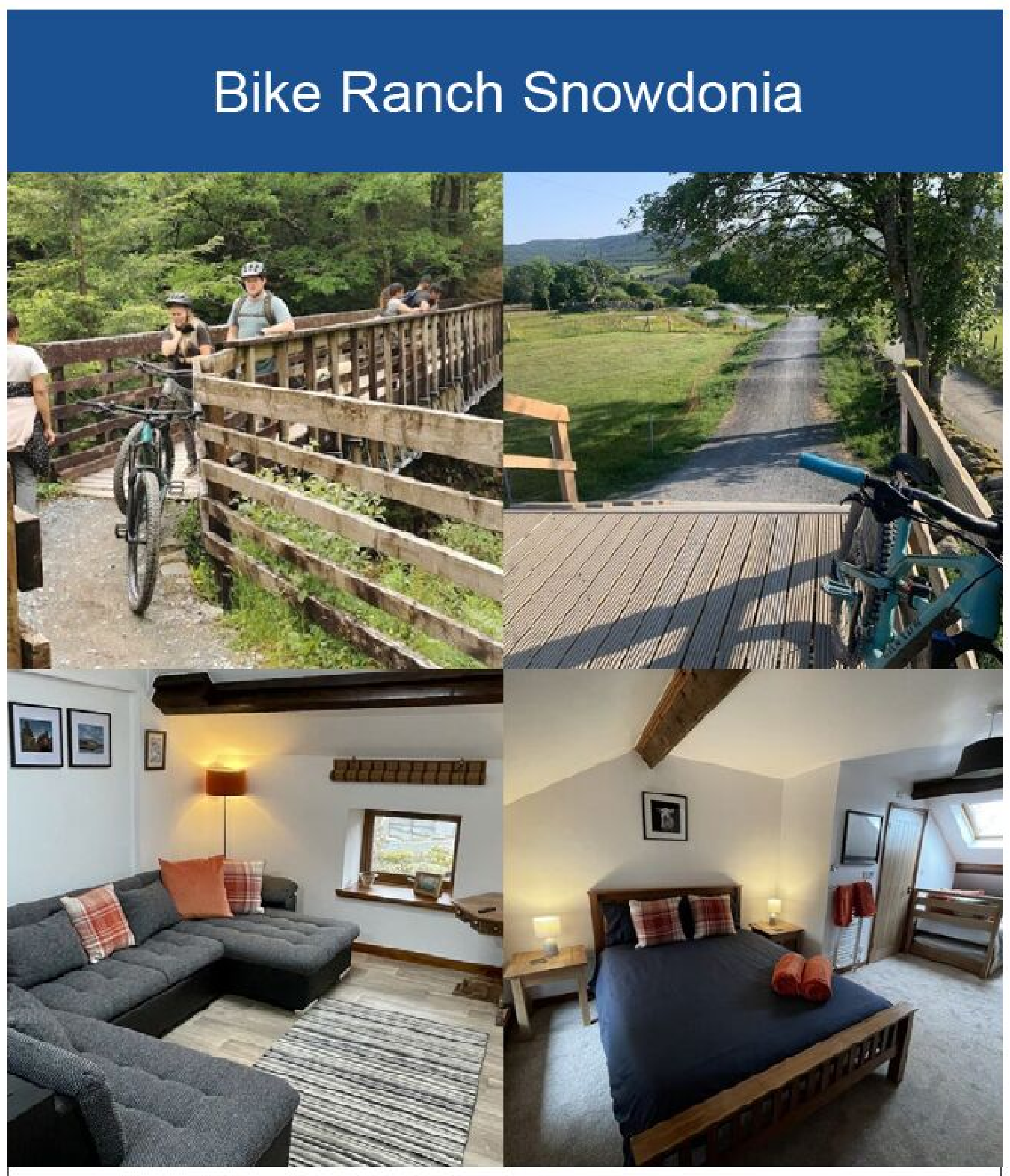

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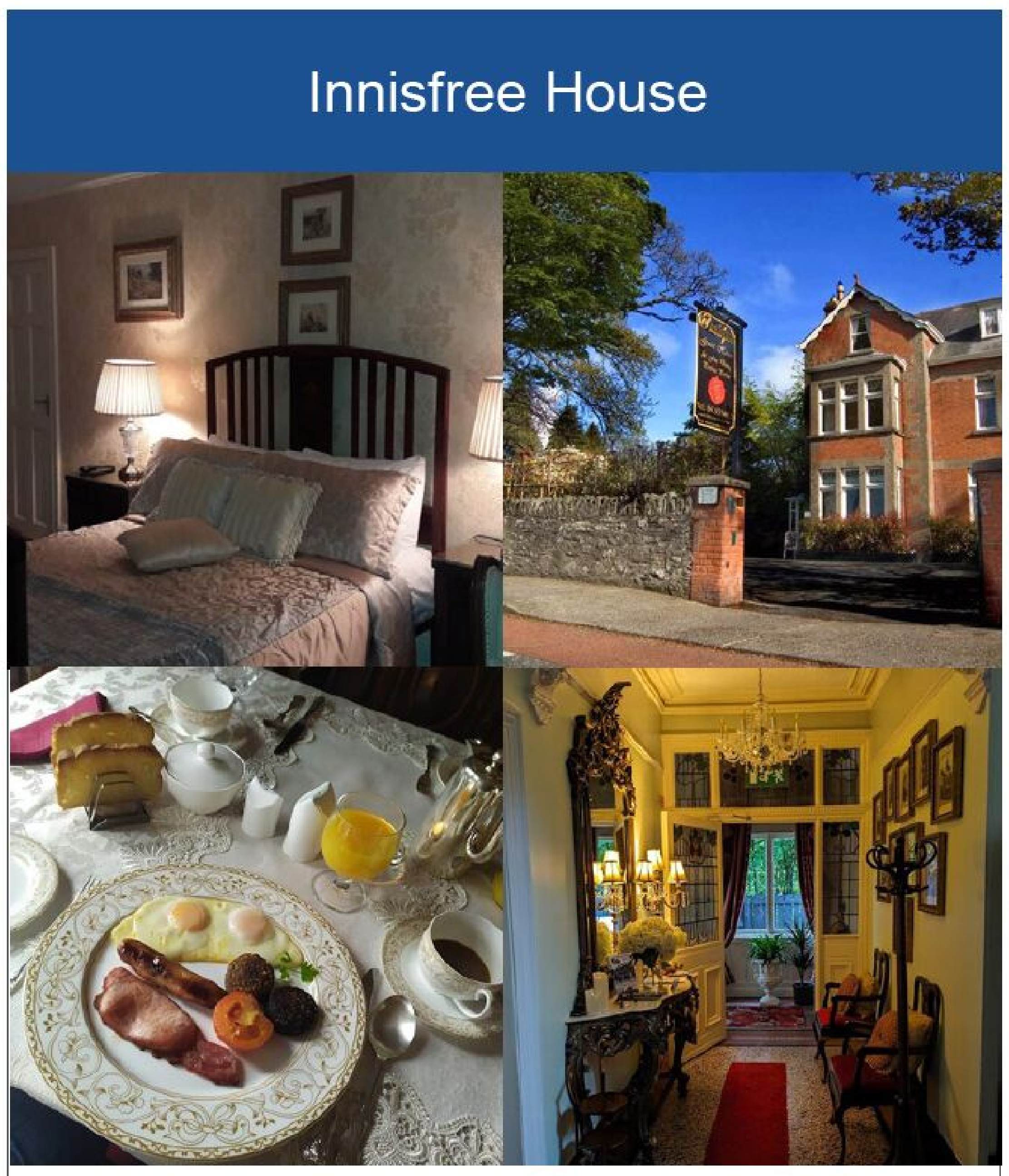

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